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WINDSOR CASTLE : from the River Thames.

MEN & MANSIONS

BY
HAROLD SPENDER

"This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England."

RICHARD II, Act II, Sc. 1.



THORNTON BUTTERWORTH LIMITED
15 BEDFORD STREET, LONDON, W.C.2

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Class No, (वर्ग)	७२४
Book No, (पुस्तक)	३७९१७
Received On, ...	Aug. 1947

First Published 1924

3790

To
MY CHILDREN

Contents

	PAGE
FOREWORD	II
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	12
I THE SOVEREIGNS AND WINDSOR CASTLE	15
II THE PRIME MINISTERS AND "NUMBER TEN"	37
III THE ARCHBISHOPS AND LAMBETH	55
IV WOLSEY AND HAMPTON COURT	71
V CHANCELLOR AUDLEY AND AUDLEY END	89
VI THE CECILS AND HATFIELD	103
VII JOHN HAMPDEN AND HAMPDEN HOUSE	117
VIII THE CROMWELLS AND HINCHINGBROOKE	135
IX CHARLES AND THE BANQUETING HOUSE	151
X MARLBOROUGH AND BLENHEIM	169
XI THE ELDER PITT AND "PITT HOUSE"	185
XII BURKE AND "GREGORIES"	199
XIII WASHINGTON AND MOUNT VERNON	217
XIV THE GRENVILLES AND STOWE HOUSE	233
XV OLIVER AND "CHEQUERS"	249
XVI THE HARCOURTS AND NUNEHAM	259
AFTERWORD	273
BIBLIOGRAPHY	277

List of Illustrations

	FACING PAGE
Windsor Castle from the River Thames	<i>.Frontispiece</i>
10, Downing Street: The Cabinet Room . . .	37
Lambeth Palace from the River Thames . . .	55
Hampton Court Palace: The Clock Court . . .	71
Audley End: The River Cam in Front . . .	89
Hatfield House: The East Front . . .	103
Hampden House: The East Front . . .	117
Hinchingbrooke: The West View . . .	135
The Banqueting House, Whitehall . . .	151
Blenheim Palace: The East Front . . .	169
The Elder Pitt: Earl of Chatham . . .	185
Edmund Burke	199
Mount Vernon from the River Potomac . . .	217
Stowe House: The North Front . . .	233
Chequers Court	249
Nuneham: from the North-West . . .	259

MEN AND MANSIONS

A Foreword

MEN and Mansions—Mansions and Men.
For the history of Mansions is the history of Men.

Mansions renew to us the very texture of that life which is past. We can see our English ancestors emerging from the darkened castles of the Middle Ages into the ample, radiant comfort of the Tudors.

Then, again, we see the splendour of the Tudor mansion fade into the simpler, narrower domicile of the Puritans.

In a flash, comes the great classical movement of the later Renaissance, and we have the great palaces of Blenheim and Castle Howard.

Once more the Englishman tires of palaces and returns to the simpler comfort and elegance of the "Adam" houses and the modern country villa.

So the tale of our Mansions becomes a large chapter in the story of Man on this little draughty island moored in the North Sea.

England is almost the only country that possesses this particular glory. France lost the cream of her great châteaux in the Revolution; Germany never developed that particular type of urbane and cultured country life. America's pride is the modern suburban residence.

England's peculiar possession—as rare as it is rich—is this of the Mansion. Many of her greatest

Mansions are now changing hands. New Men are taking possession.

But the Mansions will conquer the Men. They have done so before, and they will do so again.

For the Mansion in chilly England is always the mould and the master of the Man.

So here I have endeavoured to envisage Men in the framework of the Mansions they have inhabited.

* * * *

My thanks are due to Lord Stamfordham, the King's Private Secretary, and Mr. G. E. Miles, the Inspector of Windsor Castle, for generous and unstinted assistance in the preparation of the first chapter—The Sovereigns and Windsor Castle; to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, for equally valuable help in regard to Lambeth Palace; to the Marquis of Salisbury, K.G., in relation to Hatfield House; to the Earl of Buckinghamshire as to Hampden House; the Earl of Sandwich as to Hinchbrook; to the late President of the United States, Mr. Warren Harding, for facilitating my visit to Mount Vernon; to the Viscountess Harcourt, G.B.E., for help at Nuneham and Stanton Harcourt; to Colonel Sir Arthur Leatham, C.M.G., for conveying to me his intimate knowledge of the Banqueting House at Whitehall; and to Mrs. Valentine Fleming, for her kindness in giving me free access to Pitt House, Hampstead, for a time the home of the Earl of Chatham.

H. S.

I

The Sovereigns and Windsor Castle

“Where brave Windsor stood on tip-toe to behold
The fair and goodly Thames, so far as e’er he could,
The kingly houses crown’d, of more than earthly pride,
Upon his either banks, as he along doth glide.”

MICHAEL DRAYTON’S *Polyolbion*, 17th Song.

I

The Sovereigns and Windsor Castle

"Worthy the owner, and the owner it."

The Merry Wives of Windsor, Act V.

A CROSS the wide-stretching plain of the central Thames valley Windsor Castle shines afar. Poised on its hill, just where our exquisite English river turns and twists in windings of evasive and capricious beauty, the great Round Tower looks out over the surrounding country with an air of assured command. Silver and grey in the shifting lights and shadows of chequered English days, Windsor is without doubt the most beautiful castle in Western Europe.

All around lies that green, deep-meadowed, river-nourished landscape, so fair and so temperate, so lovely and so prosperous; so remote from the shocks and tempests of war. A straggling town clings to the flanks of the hill, and nestles at its feet. The most famous school of Western Europe fills the river meadows with the clamour and strife of English youth.

Thus eminent and conspicuous, Windsor Castle stands out as a beacon to British eyes and British hearts. Yet, with all this semblance of challenge, Windsor is a dwelling-house rather than a castle. In its lofty peacefulness and its high tranquillity of repose, this mighty historic pile is the sure magnet

and lodestar of our race. It expresses in stone one deep sentiment of our people :

“ Our loyal passion for our temperate kings.”

Watch from the railway window as the train brings you to Windsor from east or west ; or gaze from the motor-car as you travel by road. You will perceive that those crowded walls and towers—those ordered precipices of stone—change character with the angle of your vision. Every mansion has a character of its own ; but this one has a character that varies with the aspect of approach. Thus it is that, seen from afar, Windsor Castle is now a frowning fortress ; then again a feudal castle. But as you draw near, all that menace of power fades. The fortress takes on the smile of a friend. The castle becomes a home.

Its terror diminishes as you draw nearer to its gates. Its frown is only for those who remain apart.

For the slow centuries have softened Windsor Castle, and robbed it of its terrors. The moat has gone, and with it the bridge and portcullis. The dungeons have disappeared, or become a show. The gates and towers shine an easy welcome, and the wayfarers stream in and out of the courtyards.

The long civil peace of England has thus disarmed this castle of our kings. There are no thunders on its brow. Its very cannon look peaceful. The warders, whether soldiers or policemen, have a gentle and tranquil air. Its walls and towers, lofty and imposing as they are, are steeped in kindness. They wear that aspect of mutual confidence which is the secret of our common well-being.

It was not ever thus. In its origin Windsor Castle was built deliberately for conquest and oppression. Its first foundations were laid by William the Norman—that thick-set, sturdy, bull-necked, little soldier from Northern Europe who wrested our island throne from the softer Saxon.

Hunting along the Thames one day, William's keen, soldierly eye perceived a long chalk down running close to the river, not far from the quiet little town of Old Windsor, a hamlet that was the favourite resort of our Saxon kings. It was in the palace of Old Windsor that Godwin died, and Harold wrestled with Tostig.

This long chalk down near the Thames had been noted also by Edward the Confessor, but only that he might help to save his precious soul by handing it over to the monks of Westminster. William the Norman had far other designs. He was less anxious about his soul in the next world than he was about his life in this. So he roughly snatched back the land from the monks and turned it into one of those fortresses with which he kept insurgent England well under his iron heel.

It was a vital military point. For the down was defended on the north by a steep cliff of slippery, broken chalk, so close to the river that anyone who held the hill strongly could prevent an enemy from sailing up the river from London to Reading or Oxford. Thus, originally what the Barons' castles were to the Rhine and the Danube, Windsor Castle was to the Thames. At a time when waterways were the most effective highways, he who held Windsor practically held central Southern England.

On the top of that down William dug a moat. Flinging up the soil, he produced a pyramid. On that pyramid he built a palisaded castle. That moat and that pyramid exist to-day in the very centre of our modern Windsor Castle. But the place of the palisaded castle has been taken by the "Round Tower," built by Henry II and completed by George IV. Crowned by its new turrets, that famous structure, begun by William the Norman, is the tower we see to-day from afar.

For ever since William the Conqueror's first founda-

tion, English monarch after English monarch have added to Windsor Castle ; building by building, tower by tower, and room by room, enriching and adorning it according to their taste and fancy. Each addition has varied with the temper and spirit of the age—now military and now domestic, now simple and now ornate. The history of England is built into those stones. The fate of dynasties is sculptured in those walls and towers. The continuous and unbroken efforts of nearly nine centuries are expressed in this pile. The art and devotion—the resources and skill—of the whole English race since the Conquest have gone to finish and complete this mighty dwelling-place of kings.

But the keynote of Windsor to-day is not strength, but friendliness. The monarchy that built it as a fortress now dwells in it as a mansion.

* * * * *

How is it that this ancient monarchy of Great Britain has reached this point of central calm—just when so many others are falling, or have fallen ?

Let us see.

On a hot afternoon of the summer of 1897, in the midst of the second of those great rejoicings with which Queen Victoria brought her long reign to a climax, a company of men were gathered on the lawns facing the Eastern Terrace of Windsor Castle. It was the Diamond Jubilee reception to the Commons of England. Amid that gathering, out and about, winding her way over the lawns, through the moving kaleidoscope of her guests, Queen Victoria passed. The little old lady looked very diminutive in the landau drawn by her bay ponies.

How vividly I can recollect to-day that figure—so small and yet so imperious—that commanding face beneath the tight Victorian bonnet : the strong profile, the searching eye, the close-knit lip, the

curved, resolute nose, the strong, wilful chin ! She moved that day in a wonderful atmosphere of reverence and awe, dowered with the magic of the years, crowned with the treasure of experience. Behind and around her all the time was that mighty background of the grey old castle.

She was very old, that Lady of Windsor, but also very shrewd, very much alive, very vigilant all the time to the true interests of her house.

Every now and again the little ambling ponies were halted, and the Queen stopped to talk. At that point Lord Arthur Hill, a tall, handsome figure of a man, would move from the side of the carriage, plunge into the crowd and fetch back with him—almost as if by force—some Member of Parliament with whom the Queen desired to speak.

One remarkable fact soon became obvious.

Nearly all those Members thus honoured by the Queen belonged to what was already known as the "Labour Party."

So all through that summer afternoon the Queen steadily pursued her ingenious errand, holding on to that thread of sympathy ; paying little attention to Conservatives or Liberals, sure and certain props of her throne, but picking out with careful and calculated skill representative members of those new forces that then, at that time, were first beginning to show above the flood.

The effect on these men was interesting to note. They received the summons with a gasp, being mainly men of English modesty.

"Me? Not me?," they queried. But Lord Arthur Hill was in a hurry, and he drew them swiftly after him. In a few moments they would come back awed and silent, more Royalist than the Queen.

I noted one case at very near hand. It was that of a prominent Member of Parliament with whom

I chanced to travel from London to Windsor. On the journey down he was very vocal.

"The Queen?" he cried to the listening carriage. "The Queen is no more to me than any washer-woman! Neither more nor less!" So spake he, little knowing his fate.

Shortly after arriving at Windsor, he was culled from my side by Lord Arthur Hill, and taken up to the Queen. A few moments later he came back, his face shining.

"Ah, man!" he cried. "She has a beautiful voice!"

That was the beginning of the end. On the way back to London he invited us all to supper at his club. There he ordered a magnum of champagne, and in the small hours of the morning I left him, regretfully, but feeling that departure was the wisest course. For he was at that moment challenging me to personal combat on behalf of Her Majesty!

Thus early did the modern monarchy recognize this coming power, and ever since, as we all know, has given to it what we English know as "fair play." To-day the Crown reaps the fruits of this impartiality, and wins from a new world the testimony of an admiring loyalty. So we are landed in the paradox that as the political power of England becomes more democratic the English spirit becomes more monarchic. The world looks on and wonders; but we English understand.

There is nothing new in all this. Our monarchs of to-day are simply carrying on the tradition of the old English kingship. The Tudors, for instance, always played to the "common people" over the heads of nobles and priests. Henry VIII was always a people's monarch—"broad based upon the people's will."

Queen Elizabeth, indeed, anticipated Queen Victoria

A foreign visitor to the English Court in 1598¹—when Elizabeth was old and experienced—describes to us a characteristic scene. Elizabeth was passing through a throng of English people who had come to gaze at her on her progress from room to room in one of her palaces. As she passed, they all fell on their knees, crying out, "Long live Queen Elizabeth!"

The Queen showed no pride. At every cheer she smiled more sweetly on them, and answered very simply and lovingly:

"I thank you, my good people, with all my heart."

It was a family greeting: the meeting of friends. There is the true spirit of the British monarchy.

This same tradition of trust in the people, in the very widest sense of that phrase, is extended, as we all know, to the Great Apartments of Windsor Castle. The largest and most important State rooms are opened to the great world on five days of the week, whenever the Court is away from Windsor. Those apartments include a magnificent series of rooms entered from the North Terrace—the State Rooms of Audience and Presence; the picture rooms of Rubens and Van Dyck; the reconstructed St. George's Hall; and the quaint and curious Waterloo Chamber, constructed by George IV so queerly after the model of a ship's cabin.

There are few more splendid shows, in any European country, than those great rooms at Windsor Castle.

The walls are crowded with pictures that are the fruits of an old alliance. For it has been the tradition of our English royalty, right up to recent years, to rally to its service and glory the greatest painters of England and the Continent. Lawrence and Reynolds served the Georges almost as faithfully as

¹ This account was given by a young German lawyer, Paul Hentzner

Holbein served the Tudors and Van Dyck the Stuarts. The splendid results still hang on these walls.

Many of these rooms—the Presence and the Audience Chambers, for instance—stand to-day as they were in the reign of Charles II. But even more were torn to pieces by George IV during that tearing, raging campaign of reconstruction which outlasted his reign. He employed a remarkable architect, the nephew of the great Wyatt. The “First Gentleman of Europe” knighted this younger Wyatt under the formidable name of “Sir Jeffry Wyatville.”

Sir Jeffry, acting after his kind and time, removed the beautiful wood-carvings of Grinling Gibbons destroyed the old panellings and ceilings, and constructed new corridors and passages. In a word, he “modernized” this part of Windsor Castle. The beautiful old historic St. George’s Hall was destroyed, and a new, smart, clean, wainscoted chamber took its place. It is magnificent—but it is not history.

There is a strong defence to be made. The old bedrooms opened into one another. There were few passages in that old castle. The State Rooms were small and narrow. The old building was schemed and planned for a smaller Court, a cruder life and a poorer people. The Court had to live. But some of the old spirit has been lost. We miss in this part of the palace the true soul of the old British monarchy.

That soul is to be found elsewhere, in a portion of the castle which the public does not enter.

In the very centre of the building, beyond the Round Tower, there is a group of rooms which survives almost intact from the days of Edward III. Groping one’s way into these rooms along the narrow passages and stairways, one realizes that in that noble period of the castle’s history (1327–1377)

Windsor Castle was just a mediæval fortress, with thick walls and narrow windows, constructed for war. But it was a castle of heroes.

For it was into this castle that our splendid monarch Edward III invited the knights of France and England on that occasion when he held, in the meadows of Windsor by the river, the mighty tournament which provoked the envy of the King of France. It was in that castle, where the kings fared hard, and slept on hard beds, that the great King of Chivalry first dreamed his famous dream of an order of knighthood which would revive the glories of King Arthur's Round Table.

So dreaming, Edward constructed an actual round table, two hundred feet across—a fit table for heroes. As there was no room in the castle which could hold such a piece of furniture, he began to construct this table in the inner courtyard of the castle. But money failed, and wars came, and the friendship between the kings waned. The knights of England, instead of joining with the knights of France at the same table, fought the knights of France on the battlefields of Crécy (1346) and Poitiers (1356).

It was at the battle of Crécy that Edward III took the garter from his leg, and, holding it up to his soldiers as a mark of unity, first conceived the idea of that mighty Order of the Garter which is still the greatest of our English knighthoods.¹

After Edward III Windsor Castle was, for many centuries, chiefly and principally the centre of this Order. That was its meaning and purpose. St. George's Chapel was the knights' cathedral, and the Round Tower was their meeting-place. Even to-day St. George's Chapel—that exquisite and fairy-like structure—is perhaps Windsor's most distinguishing glory; and in its reconstruction to-day all the emblems and

¹ The famous story of Lady Salisbury's garter picked up by Edward was probably a mediæval jest.

relics of the Order of the Garter will be most faithfully restored. The motto of the Order—"Honi soit qui mal y pense"—strikes the true note in the history of Windsor Castle. It is the idea which inspires our best conception of kingship—an honour that lies above suspicion or stain.

But, alas, how far the reality has lagged behind the ideal! Kingship in the past has been reddened with tragedy and terror. Windsor Castle is full of the ghosts of these things. You feel that, if anywhere on the earth, here the spirits of the past must return.

There are, for instance—standing at an angle of the "Principal Floor"—the apartments in which the old monarch George III lived through the darkness of the last eight years of his calamitous life. Those rooms are no longer used for the domestic life of the Court. They have been turned into offices for the Master of the Household.

Standing there now in those workaday rooms, it is difficult to envisage the black tragedy. Here, through all those years, the old man in the long purple gown, with the long white beard, groped through the darkness of his mental night. He was moved to Kew during his first attack. But when the early death of his darling daughter, Amelia, finally threw reason from its seat, the old king was mercifully allowed to remain at Windsor. His son disliked the castle, and built a house for himself in the town. While his father raved, he amused himself after his own fashion. But George III never again left Windsor, and while England was ringing with the rejoicings of Waterloo, George III sat in darkness and the shadow of night.

"Now that all hearts are glad, all faces bright,
Our aged Sovereign sits, to the ebb and flow
Of states and kingdoms, to their joy or woe,
Insensible. He sits deprived of sight,
And lamentably wrapt in twofold night—"

It was in 1820 that the end at last came, after nine years of unbroken darkness. George never recovered. Only now and again a gleam broke through the blackness.

Byron, with indecent joy, scoffed at

"this old, blind, mad, helpless, weak, poor worm."

But Wordsworth voiced England better in his sad and searching lines :

"Ward of the Law! Dread shadow of a King!

Whose Realm had dwindled to one stately room!"

George III was the only one of the earlier Georges to live in Windsor Castle—and then only during that final madness. The first two Georges lived little in England, and less in Windsor. They preferred the simpler joys of Hanover. By the time of George III, therefore, the castle had become so dilapidated and decayed in consequence of this neglect that the Court could not be carried on there. So that George built a house, called "Queen's Lodge," in Windsor, and lived in it during most of his reign.

Joseph Farington, in that entertaining diary which is now at last given to the world, tells us on June 8th, 1794, that King George "would have fitted up and lived in Windsor Castle, but he was told that it could not be made comfortably habitable." That is why he lived in "Queen's Lodge."

George IV resolutely refused to live in any house built by his father. Therefore "Queen's Lodge" was ruthlessly pulled down in 1823 and the present vista from the castle to the statue at the end of the Long Walk was opened up. George IV built yet another house, "Royal Lodge," and in his easy way he used to drive about Windsor with Lady Conyngham, who was, in his later years, the centre of his uncertain heart.

George IV's rebuildings inside the castle were still unfurnished when the Reaper called him. "This

is death," he cried as he looked into the darkness and felt the clutch at his throat. His soul was required of him.

His brother, William IV, built "Adelaide Cottage," but though his queen—Adelaide—often lived there, it is doubtful whether William IV himself ever inhabited it. These sons of George III had one fixed rule, and that was never to live in a house that had been inhabited by another of their family. Amiable people!

"Adelaide Cottage," still exists. It is a very convenient afternoon-tea place for royalties, and is very popular with them. It is the last of those little royal villas that took the place of Windsor Castle in the past.

* * * * *

Thackeray has given us a very black picture of these Georges and their waistcoats and their ugly mistresses. But George III, at any rate, was tremendously popular as long as he was sane, and perhaps never more popular than when he was recovering from his madness.

Fanny Burney, that most vivid of descriptive writers, was a maid of honour at the Court, and travelled to Weymouth with the Royal Family after the recovery. She has described the rejoicings in that famous and wonderful Diary which she kept so diligently throughout the five years of her service to Queen Charlotte.¹

George III was made to bathe in the sea, and he practically invented sea-bathing for the English race. But the embarrassing thing was that the crowd at Weymouth followed him into the ocean, and when the "Farmer King" popped up from under the waves, his royal head very wet and unattractive, it was to hear the sounds of "God save the King!" from a neighbouring bathing machine.

¹ 1786-1791.

George III was very fond of Fanny Burney—"The Burney," as he called her. He would, when at ease, stroll into the rooms of the ladies-in-waiting at the "Queen's Lodge," and start a chat with Fanny Burney, who was the only woman about the Court who could talk. He imagined that he ought to "talk books" with her, and the results were very strange.

One day George III began discussing Shakespeare. His opinions, if not really uncommon, were at any rate boldly expressed :

"Was there ever," cried he, "such stuff as great part of Shakespeare? only one must not say so! But what think you?—What?—Is there not sad stuff? What?—what?"

"Yes, indeed, I think so, sir, though mixed with such excellences that——"

"O!" cried he, laughing good-humouredly, "I know it is not to be said! but it's true. Only it's Shakespeare, and nobody dare abuse him."

From the moment that George III spoke thus frankly to Fanny Burney she became a changed woman. All the great qualities of that brilliant writer became fused into a new adoration. That adoration transformed Fanny Burney from a great novelist into a humble idolater of kings. George III's commonplaces became prophecies.

For royalism is a furnace into which whoever goes, goes at peril. Few emerge unsinged.

Perhaps the best of these brothers of George IV was the last—William the Sailor. He may have rolled down Piccadilly and lost his temper at State dinners; but he had one good taste—a library. It was he who built and furnished that beautiful treasury of books which looks out over the Northern Terrace. From the windows of that splendid sanctuary you look out over the plain of the Thames,

and see glistening in the distance the pinnacles of Henry VI's exquisite chapel—the "distant spires and antique towers" of Gray's poem. The library is still young, but it contains many precious gifts, including the splendid world-famous collection of the drawings of Michael Angelo and Leonardo da Vinci.

Queen Anne was sitting one day of August, 1704, at her embroidery in one of the little chambers that look out over this wonderful terrace, where Elizabeth once walked in her pomp and the second Charles loved to stroll. She looked up and saw a messenger approaching rapidly along the terrace. A minute later and he was in the chamber on bended knee to announce the victory of Blenheim.

Ever since, on that day (August 2nd), the reigning descendant of the first Duke of Marlborough has brought, and still brings, to Windsor Castle a fresh copy of the old Bourbon flag, the white flag with the lilies. The King comes down to receive him. The duke kneels before his monarch as his liege lord, and delivers the flag to his keeping. The flag hangs for a whole year beneath the bust of the old duke, and is thereafter stored in Queen Anne's little room. Some time ago the flags overflowed, and there had to be a summary clearance.

Each Waterloo day (June 18th) the same ceremony is performed by the living Duke of Wellington. He kneels before the King and presents him with a tricolour.

One sometimes wonders whether in this country of England anything ever changes. Those flags! That kneeling! The old feudal homage! The undying memories!

The old, indeed, is still very much with us. At the western end of the Northern Terrace, for instance, there still stands the great tower of Bishop William of Wykeham, and on it is still to be read in bold,

black lettering that phrase which caused so much trouble to the great builder :

HOC FECIT WYKEHAM.

For Wykeham had the one noble weakness of the architect—pride in his work. So he wrote on the tower, when finished, his simple legend.

But the great Edward III, his master, suffered from a weakness of the same kind. Like many designers, he loved to steal the fame of the architect.

It was his darling fancy, "Alone I did it." So when the eye of Edward III fell upon these letters—HOC FECIT WYKEHAM—he gave free play to one of those thunderous rages which were then among the privileges of monarchs.

"What is the meaning of this?" he cried; and Wykeham was brought before him.

"What right have you to say that you made this tower," he cried, "when it is well known that I was the inspirer?"

But Wykeham was a great scholar, as well as a great architect, and his response was apt and ready.

"What does Your Majesty suppose that it means?" he asked.

"Wykeham made this," replied Edward III.

"No," said Wykeham. "There Your Majesty is wrong. The proper translation is—'This made Wykeham.'"

So the great William of Wykeham, the builder of Winchester and New College, at once, with one soft answer, pacified the mighty king and corrected his Latin.

Yet something does change. For instance, it is a very different Court to-day from the idle, self-indulgent coterie of aliens described by Fanny Burney in her immortal *Diary*. We have taken some glimpses of that old Court; let us, through the eyes of the living, take a glimpse of the Court of to-day, as it lives and

works at Windsor Castle when it is in residence.

George V is usually an early riser, and generally rides in the Great Park before breakfast. He returns to breakfast at 9.30—with him a very simple and frugal meal. At ten o'clock he sees his secretaries—and no king could have a more devoted secretary than the chief, the veteran Lord Stamfordham, who has been one of the props of our monarchy for forty-two years. He has served under three monarchs—Victoria, Edward, and George—and his advice in times of difficulty must be of no mean value to the King.

The King's next duty is to deal with the business that comes down from London. Two messengers arrive daily from the Metropolis—one at 11.30 a.m. and the other at 7 p.m. The whole morning is taken up with the many papers that arrive, especially when Parliament is in session. But at such times the King is rarely at Windsor, as he makes it part of his duty to stay in London as far as possible while Parliament is sitting.

The old plan of detaching a Cabinet Minister to be in attendance on the monarch, followed steadily throughout the two previous reigns, has now somewhat gone out of custom. With the machinery of modern telephones it is really unnecessary. Besides, King George V is now supplied with full minutes of the Cabinet meetings, whereas in former days the monarch had to rely on inaccurate summaries made up by tired Prime Ministers. That is one advantage of "minuting" the Cabinet, since the King is, by constitutional practice, debarred from attendance.

When the King is at Buckingham Palace the real pressure of work comes on in the evening, especially from six to eight o'clock, after the Government offices have closed. It is at that time that the flow of the red boxes, so familiar to Cabinet Ministers, mounts up in the rooms of the palace. At Windsor

the King has an easier time, and gives up most of his evenings to hospitality.

On evenings of State the Royal Family use the big private apartments on the eastern side of the castle, which cannot easily be opened to the public—the Crimson Drawing Room, in which the guests are received; the Green Drawing Room, where the Queen sits with the ladies after dinner; the White Drawing Room, where the King has his private talks with State visitors. These, with the State Dining Room, form a very fine set of apartments, and their windows command wide and beautiful prospects over the beautiful English landscapes of the Thames valley. What scenes must have taken place in those rooms! What talks!

Here the Kaiser once loved to strut his hour. For it was one of his peculiarities, even when he was plotting against England, to woo the English Court. Here, in these rooms, he shone and glittered in his brilliant uniforms.

"I always said that Willie would come to no good!" said a Royal Princess, whose speech is a running commentary on the history of the day. "He was such a naughty child!"

Wise Princess! If we could only all see so far!

Now he lives far away on the dull flats of Holland. But I can still see him, in my mind's-eye, flitting like some restless bee through those glittering salons—so friendly, so gay, so word-perfect in his English, so well informed. How he used to impress innocent British Cabinet Ministers!

"Fiddlesticks!" said the Princess. "He is always coached!"

The private apartments of the Royal Family are approached from the Eastern Terrace, which looks out over the splendid gardens to the great distances of Central England. The approach is through several smaller chambers of profound historical interest.

There is the "Stuart Room," into which royalty has collected a strange and unique collection of Stuart relics. One of those relics is the lace collar, spotted with his blood, worn by Charles I on the day of his execution. There is also a picture of the Young Pretender which bears a haunting likeness to the present Princess Mary.

Not far away, along the passage, is the Holbein Room. It is full of Holbein originals, copies, and imitations of the great Dutch artist. It is a sort of picture gallery of the Tudor period. This little gallery is like a window let into the realities of the past. One often figures those Tudor folk as merry. But here they scowl and frown from Holbein's canvases—those butchers and secret murderers of the people—those men who gave no ruth and expected none! That is where the great artist also becomes the great historian, showing you, if only through a glass darkly, the very soul of the past.

Not far away are the cosy little sitting and luncheon rooms which Queen Victoria loved. She shunned the State reception rooms during those long, slow years of mourning after the death of the Prince Consort. She covered them with cretonnes, and she drew down the blinds, until the people broke in with loud, irreverent clamour, and reminded her that she was a queen as well as a widow,

Yet she held her people to the end. She died, and then came the brief, flashing period of Edward VII, the man who loved life with so feverish a passion, as if he knew that his would be short.

They talk of those times at Windsor to-day—those "crowded hours of glorious life." Day and night lost their confines. Life was one gorgeous scramble to catch the fleeting joys of the passing hour.

"Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to midday,
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do you
say?"

That monarch, at any rate, possessed the art of splendid living. Edward worked hard, both at business and pleasure. He made others work hard, too, but let them enjoy themselves also. It was a time of light and delight. England could afford it then!

Stern days were to follow. The Great War brought eclipse to Windsor. The cataract of gold had to stop. There were no times for the racket of pleasure. Other times, other monarchs.

By a strange dispensation, the stress of the war fell on a king with a very different temperament from his father. There were those who frowned at the change.

"Ginger beer and lemonade! Lemonade and ginger beer!" a great Minister sombrely remarked on his return from a stay at Windsor Castle at the height of the war.

But the people looked on and admired. They loved the King more for sharing their privations.

It was not ever thus at Windsor.

Greville records how William IV, shortly before his death, thought fit to address the austere Leopold, the first King of the Belgians.

"What's that you are drinking?" he said sharply to Leopold at dinner.

"Water," said Leopold.

"Damn water! Why don't you drink wine? I have never allowed anyone to drink water at my table."

It is scarcely remarkable that Leopold left Windsor Castle next morning.

That good-natured king, Edward VII, was accustomed to joke pleasantly about his position as monarch. He would place his hand on the shoulder of the son he loved and say—so the story goes—"It will just last your time."

And yet there seems no reason why it should not last much longer. As long as the English kings

"reign but do not govern," the people of England will be loyal. Other thrones are still crashing: none seem secure. But the difference here is that the English kings and the English people each know where the line is drawn. They have settled their differences. They have drawn their frontiers. They have made a peace. The peace with all its loyalties and submissions is one of the mysteries of the modern world.

Serene fictions of a workaday people! Fancies that deceive but do not delude! Idylls of the mind that govern the lives of prosaic millions! Poetry that glows, a central fire, on the inner hearthstone of our race!

Windsor Castle seems to stand to-day as some token of our security—shining there by the old Thames, so beautiful and yet so kindly; grey mother of all of us; shaken by so many storms, and yet so firm and so enduring.

Through shower and shine it smiles across that central plain on the people of England.

The castle still crowns its hill.

II

The Prime Ministers and "Number Ten"

" We'll talk with them too,
Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out ;
And take upon 's the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies."

KING LEAR (*to Cordelia*), Act V, Sc. III,



Olive Edis, F.R.P.S.

10 DOWNING STREET.

THE CABINET ROOM: with the Prime Minister's chair.

II

The Prime Ministers and "Number Ten"

IT is a little three-storied house of smoke-begrimed brick, in a little, old street, overshadowed by the great Government offices of the Victorian age, yet as famous as it is ancient and hidden. In its proud obscurity and majestic modesty it is English of the best.

"Number Ten"—that is how its intimates know the house. Just "Number Ten"—at once old and new, simple and powerful; hiding, like all the greatest things in England, its claim to power behind a front of simplicity and homeliness.

Yet it is awful in its weight of memory. For this house has been the official home of our Prime Ministers ever since George II gave it to Sir Robert Walpole two centuries ago. It has housed fifty British Premiers in that time, and to-day it is still the centre of British power.

"Number Ten" is the House of Power in the Street of Power. The other houses—Number Eleven, the home of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Number Twelve, the office of the Government Whips—are merely the appendages of this central domicile.

Foreigners come to see a palace of marble, and find a cottage of brick. They gaze up at the silent windows and watch the closed door. Vigilant reporters note the smiles and frowns of those who enter or leave. There is no street or house that

lives more perpetually under the microscope;

They scrutinize the big, shining, brass knocker; they examine the simple brass plate, like the plate of some provincial doctor, with the awesome inscription, "The First Lord of the Treasury." They stare at the motor-cars which stand at the door; they wait all the time for something to happen—someone to speak.

But no one speaks: nothing happens. The forces that eddy round that closed door are silent at the centre; it is the quiet spot in the very middle of the human whirlpool. Violence centres in stillness.

Yet the house is full of voices; not so much the voices of the present, the jarring, factious voices of the rivals who come and go, who clutch at that knocker and ambush one another along that street—the "transient and embarrassed phantoms" of the passing hour; but the majestic voices of the past—the voices of the mighty men who have lived and struggled there; of those who have brought the British power safely through all its tempests and hurricanes.

Looked at thus, "Number Ten" ceases to be a house at all. It is like some piece of old wreckage—or the storm-smitten, battle-riven hull of some old *Victory*—glorious for its past, raised above all need of pomp or display. There it lies in harbour, a crew still on board, but overshadowed all the time by memories and traditions, haunted with great presences.

Let us enter the house, and imagine it still peopled with those mighty tenants—

"think ye see
The very persons of our noble story
As they were living."

The big front door of "Number Ten" closes behind you—and you find yourself in a small,

square hall, adorned on all its walls with the horns and skulls of deer and antelope, the grim gifts of some sporting Premier, as if they were intended to symbolize the victims of Power.

You pass down a long passage into a larger hall, furnished and warmed, and provided with a curtained recess set apart for visitors as a waiting-room. On the mantelpiece of the large fireplace is a bust of Wellington as a young man, heroic and godlike, instinct with a kind of spotless integrity. It is England at her noblest. Or perhaps the true England is even better represented in the bust of the Younger Pitt, now on the mantelpiece in the inner hall. It is Pitt with the smile and the tip-tilted nose; Pitt at the finest moment of his youthful idealism—before his ardour was clouded with the long strain of war. The poise of the head bespeaks indomitable daring and invincible self-confidence.

Turn sharply to the left, and you pass through a small room—the room of the secretaries—and find yourself in the Council Chamber of the Cabinets. Here you stand in the central shrine of British power. For with certain intervals of wandering, British Cabinets have sat in this room ever since the mid-eighteenth century. It has echoed with all the most critical controversies of our fate. Here Pitt's Cabinets sat all through the Napoleonic wars, and reached the vital decisions that "saved Europe by our example." What moments have passed in this room! What tragedies! Aye, and what comedies!

We look back now at England's story from the summit of achievement. We forget that here, in this chamber, British Ministers have often looked straight into the Gorgon faces of defeat and disaster and remained undismayed.

Yet this room, so sacred in history, was once

just a typical dining-room of seventeenth-century London. Here the builder of the house, Sir George Downing, caroused with his friends. They loved large rooms, those ancestors of ours; and when they built this house they were just beginning to realize the power and beauty of glass in bringing light into houses. Downing probably learned from Holland the secret of the large windows of his street.

For this Cabinet Room is well windowed—with high, double-framed lights—and looks right out on to the Park.¹ The eastern end is flanked on each side with two white-painted columns with floriated Corinthian capitals.

Down the middle of the room there runs the long, broad table with the famous cloth of green baize at which the Cabinets sit. The chairs are straight-backed, as befits the consideration of great issues. After a Council that table is often scattered with secret documents, left carelessly by the Councilors, and then solemnly destroyed by the attendants. For this room is shrouded with a cloak of secrecy. We feel it in the air, as we do in the Council Chamber of Ten at the Ducal Palace in Venice. It is only of late years that even a bare minute has been taken of these Councils.

The Prime Minister's chair stands, as a rule, not at the head of the long, green-baized table, but at the centre of its southern side, in front of the fireplace.

Above the mantelpiece there hangs the only picture in the room—a portrait of the ill-starred Lord Chancellor, Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, king of knowledge but slave of himself—rather a strange presence to preside over the fortunes of England.

The Cabinet Room is singularly convenient for a Prime Minister's labours, and is now—since the

¹ See illustration opposite p. 11.

Great War—sometimes used during the daytime by the Prime Minister himself. The doors at either end of the room open into the smaller rooms of the secretaries, who can thus be easily summoned. The big table enables maps and documents to be laid out with ease. Deputations can be received without inconvenient crowding.

But the actual historic "Room of Deputations" is upstairs. You mount from the Council Chamber floor—the first—by a corkscrew staircase to the second story. The walls of the staircase are lined with engravings, in chronological order, of the Prime Ministers who have lived in the house. They were presented to "Number Ten" by private munificence, and, with the house, they belong to the nation.

As you mount you seem to be moving under the gaze of great men. They were "at ease in Zion"—these great few; they brought more to Downing Street than they took away. For, after all, it is the men who make this place sacred; the Pitts, Canning, Grey, Peel, Disraeli, Gladstone—they look at you from the walls. "Take thy shoes from off thy feet," for the ground on which you stand has been made sacred by the daily tread of these elect.

The "Room of Deputations" is the large reception room into which you enter at the head of the staircase. It is just a spacious, old-fashioned drawing-room, shaped in angular form with large windows and high walls, and adorned with many celebrated and beautiful pictures. It has been used through the years by many Prime Ministers for their great political receptions. Here, before the Great War came to darken and sadden the social side of our political life, London society used to gather and gossip, pulsing with the hum and thrill of the great political gamble. Here there

were "sounds of revelry by night"; and the great throngs of the party for the moment victorious in the fray would swirl and eddy across those floors, too crowded for comfort, but always happy with triumph.

How many memories those rooms recall! There, at the door, I can still see Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman stand to receive his guests; at his side his wife, proud of his achievement, but already stricken. On her pallid face was the hue of death. Within a year she had gone, and he was on the way to join her.

Or, in later days, Mr. Asquith—moving about the rooms, always a little shyly, as if he were a guest in his own house, but always radiantly cheerful even at the most critical times.

Or Mr. Lloyd George—alert, confident, at home, friendly with everybody, and especially with the least of his guests.

Or Mr. Bonar Law, shy, reserved, courteous, simple.

Mr. Stanley Baldwin, pipe in mouth.

Now Mr. Ramsay Macdonald—perhaps a little surprised—amid his homespun company."

How swiftly they succeed!

The background of this Reception room is now white, and the pictures stand out well.

Two portraits in this room surpass all others in interest. One is a copy of the Dutch portrait of Sir Robert Walpole, the first State tenant of the house. The portrait hangs over the great marble mantelpiece, well lighted from the northern windows. Sir Robert looks genially on the room, ruddy-faced, stout, self-confident. He is mantled in the black and gold robe of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but it is pushed aside to reveal the ample, flowered waistcoat with the deep "fob" pockets. His delicately moulded white hand—that

hand of which he was so proud—rests on the Royal Purse of the Exchequer. The riband of the Garter lies across his breast.

And yet with it all he is just the plain, rough squire of the eighteenth century—a glorified Squire Allworthy—fond of beef and beer, a little rowdy and coarse, but never ready to crook the knee or bow the head.

"Every man," he once said, "has his price." I could name one exception—Sir Robert Walpole himself.

Turn from that portrait, and you find yourself gazing on a very different picture. It is Millais's portrait of the fighting Gladstone—eagle-eyed, lion-faced; a stormy foil to that gentle, gracious image by the same great artist of Gladstone in his softer mood, rejected by the old Duke of Westminster and now hanging in our National Gallery.

In the Downing Street picture Gladstone is seated sideways, dressed in the scarlet robes of a Doctor of Law—an angry background of fierce colour to the splendid face. He fixes on you that penetrating gaze which, as his enemies said, seems to pierce your inmost soul. His eyes are alive with his sleepless vigilance for good causes and great aims. It is the Downing Street mood of the great man. That was how Gladstone looked when he stood on duty at the post of power. "Watchman, what of the night?"

You can pass through this great room through a smaller chamber—the old Breakfast Room, often used so now on family occasions—into the fine State Dining Room. This room was built by Sir John Soane in 1825—for there are two other builders at Downing Street besides Downing—Sir John Soane and Sir Christopher Wren.

It is a beautiful chamber. Its walls are panelled with oak, and roofed with an oval cupola. It is

lighted through high windows, and now its walls are hung with portraits.

This is the "room of a thousand breakfasts": the breakfasts of Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Lloyd George. Here, through the years of the War, morning after morning, sat the statesmen and soldiers who grappled with the German power and finally overthrew it.

The pictures on the walls form a gallery of the men who grappled with an earlier portent—Napoleonic France. In the centre of the western wall Nelson seems to be stepping out of his canvas to greet you—Nelson the bright-hearted, gayest of men who ever played with death.

Near by is Charles Fox, confident and reckless; and, in the far corner, Sir Joshua Reynolds's small study of Edmund Burke, pensive and sad.

But the pictured presence that seems to fill the great room is the full-length portrait of the Younger Pitt, over the mantelpiece. It was presented last century by his successors in his high office.

It is a copy of the famous picture by Hoppner, of which the original hangs in the National Portrait Gallery. It shows the great man in his last phase.

The face is imperious and moody. Pitt stands majestically, as a man might well do who had been Prime Minister since his early youth. He gazes down the full length of the room. He seems to invigilate the fate of England.

The dead-black of the tight-fitting coat gives to Pitt's figure a certain sombre solemnity. He might be thought to augur his own doom, already throwing its shadow over his dark figure and his haughty, brooding countenance.

He seems, in that picture, to claim Downing Street as his own. Might he not, indeed, well do so? For did he not live for Downing Street as well as in Downing Street? Did he not sacrifice

to this Street of Power all else that could make life dear—health, wealth, love, and leisure?

Here—in Downing Street—as we know from the recorded talks of Lady Hester Stanhope, the devoted niece who kept the house for that Bachelor of Power—William Pitt toiled unspeakably. Here he reigned in stark loneliness of soul, a giant among puppets. Here he worked for England, dying with a sense of failure.

"Roll up the map of Europe!"

He never tasted of the ultimate triumph. From Bath he travelled home to die at Putney.

So, with all his successes, Pitt's career is shadowed with *Æschylean* tragedy. That tragedy is centred here—in "Number Ten." For this was his home—the only real home—of that lone spirit.

Yet there were moments of geniality and joy in that grim life. Lady Hester Stanhope has left some tender pictures. For Pitt was very fond of children, and he practically adopted his niece and her brothers.

There is her description of the great man romping with the children downstairs. They had pulled him down on the floor and corked his face. He was a leader in the fun—and for the moment Europe was forgotten. Then, in the middle of the merry scene, a servant entered the room to announce that two members of his Cabinet wished to see him on State affairs. Pitt instantly left off the game; he retired to wash his face from the cork-stains. In a few moments he returned a new man, grim and stern. He sat down to face his Ministers, who entered with every sign of deference for their great master. Pitt was changed in a moment from the gay romper to a king of men. Lady Hester describes the awe with which the children watched the look of power that came into his face, and the rigid and stately manner

in which he received and dismissed his Ministers.

William Pitt ruled standing. There is a chair at Walmer Castle which he specially devised for his working hours. The special feature of it is that it possesses no back. You cannot lean. You sit erect to your work. That was the spirit of Pitt.

Upstairs here at Downing Street, Pitt slept in one of the smallest rooms. It was there that he was lying in deep slumber on that fearful night when Spencer—the First Lord of the Admiralty—came to announce to him the news of the mutiny at the Nore. Spencer entered the bedroom and woke up Pitt. He told him the story. Pitt listened with absolute calm, and gave his instructions. Spencer left the room and went downstairs; but when he had reached the front door he remembered, as so often happens, that there was an important fact that he had forgotten to tell Mr. Pitt. He mounted the stairs again, and entered Pitt's bedroom. He found that the Prime Minister had already turned over on his side and fallen into deep sleep.

It was with such central calm of soul that Pitt faced the dread perils of Empire.

"How do you like Number Ten?" I asked one of Mr. Lloyd George's Welsh servants, a lady with no respect for houses, just after he had moved up the street.

"Fairly well," she said in her soft Welsh accent. "But there are not so many cupboards as in Number Eleven."

So much depends on the point of view!

But if there are few cupboards in "Number Ten," there are plenty of secret places.

A dark private passage connects the house of the Prime Minister with the big chamber at the Treasury, now the office of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In the days of the early Georges the

Privy Councils, gradually dwindling to Cabinet Councils, used to be held there. A throne still stands on a small dais at the top of the room. The throne is marked with a "G.R." on a small oval. But Queen Anne was the last monarch to preside over her Treasury. George I soon tired of that duty. He came from Hanover, and he could not understand English. Very sensibly, he asked to be excused from attending the Cabinet Councils.

No British king has ever attended since.

But the throne remains there!

By the mantelpiece there are some curious ornaments that look like stands for flowers. Tap them—and they sound hollow. Open them—and you will find little empty interiors. So it is with the panelling beside the fireplace. It is full of secret places!

Those recesses had their usefulness. They were used for the reports of English spies during the dangerous crisis of the struggle with Napoleon and with the Irish Rebellion. Those reports contained secrets too perilous to be entrusted to bibulous Cabinet Ministers. They were placed there by unknown men, taken out and read to the Cabinet—and then they were put back again.

Such are the perils of power. On such a quaking morass of fear and secrecy do we build up great empires.

I have myself seen men, still gaunt and hungry from the battlefields of France, still splashed with the blood and mire of Flanders, come into those doors, to report to anxious Ministers. And spies—silent men in mufti—but men who had passed through direr and more awful perils than any soldiers—men whose eyes were haunted.

Yes, what memories crowd "Number Ten"!

The origins of Downing Street are strangely shadowed and sinister. The street was built by a

famous rascal, a speculator in houses, at a moment, after the Civil Wars, when there was a sudden rush for building.

George Downing was a Puritan renegade. He fought on the side of Oliver Cromwell in the Civil Wars. He was Scout-Master-General to the Parliamentary Army and Ambassador in the Netherlands to the Protectorate.

He had come from America, where he was educated at Harvard College. When the Restoration came, he went over to Charles II. His particular service for Charles II was the systematic and deliberate betrayal of old Puritan friends—regicides—to the scaffold. The ground of Downing Street was given to him in reward. He received the grant of this precious piece of land in the precincts of Whitehall as the price of treachery. It is a field of blood, as truly as the land where Judas slew himself.

But George Downing did not slay himself. By no means! He was more modern in his methods. He received a baronetcy and became Sir George Downing. Later on, he went into politics and became Secretary to the Treasury. He built houses on the land, and he let them to the rank and fashion of the new London that was growing up round Westminster with the return of peace and prosperity after the Civil Wars. He lived in "Number Ten" himself, and built for his dining-room that beautiful pillared chamber which is now the room used for Cabinet Councils. He let the other houses in Downing Street—of which there were many more in those days—to wealthy persons on long leases. He had no object but profit. It never crossed Downing's mind for one moment that he should present his mansion to the First Minister of the Crown. He just took his rents and lined his pockets—like any other honest landlord.

He starved his mother, and founded a fortune which, by a curious Nemesis, came back to the country, on the death of his grandson, in the form of an endowment for the college Cambridge University still calls after his name.

He was — says one contemporary record — a "doubly perjured traitor, but a most capable official."

One of Downing's greatest friends was another official, Pepys. The famous Diary is full of Downing. Pepys tells us how Downing was knighted and came to him to tell him to address him in his new style (May 22nd, 1660); how he secured the arrest of the regicides Okey, Corbet, and Barkestead at Delft in Holland (March 12th, 1661); so that even Pepys calls him a "perfidious rogue" — "though the action is good and of service to the King," he prudently adds — "yet he cannot with a good conscience do it."

Pepys did not like Downing. He could not borrow money from him.

"He is so stingy a fellow I care not to see him," he says bitterly on one visit, probably for money (June 28th, 1660). When Okey and Corbet were brought to the Tower from Holland, even Pepys feels his gorge rise, and he records that "all the world takes notice of him, as a most ungrateful villain for his pains."

But later (May 27th, 1667) Pepys highly approves the action of the new Commissioners of the Treasury in choosing Downing for their new Secretary. "I think in my conscience they have done a great thing in it; for he is active and a man of business, and values himself upon having of things do well under his hand; so that I am mightily pleased in their choice."

That was probably because Pepys, as Secretary to the impoverished Navy, wanted a friend at court. In many subsequent references we can see how

Pepys availed himself of his new friendship for the "ungrateful villain." Sir George Downing becomes a willing lender to that infamous King, one of the King's touts; and Pepys squeezes money out of the Navy—the pay of the sailors—to feed the orgies of the Court. But the ten per cent. begins to fail, and Pepys loses all interest in the loans. Still Downing sticks to the King and raises money for him; though on a Sunday at the end of 1668 (December 27th) he has a conversation with Pepys in which he tells him frankly that the King will never pay back his debt to the Navy—or the interest either.¹

Such are the glimpses we get of those two shifty rascals, in that day of open and scandalous royal "graft," moving about between Whitehall and Downing Street, on the fringes of that unspeakable Court; both of them—Pepys and Downing—real sons of the Restoration.

A strange, disillusioned time—the generation of the sons of those who on both sides had died for their faith; sons who had no faith left except that they had a right to live—and to plunder.

The Crown had never completely let go its hold on the land on which Sir George Downing had built his street. It was after his death, on the calling in of one of those leases, that "Number Ten"—then Number Fifteen—came back to the Crown, which at that moment (1731) rested on the head of George II. That monarch seems at the moment to have been in a benevolent humour, for he gave the house first to his Hanoverian Minister, Count Bothmar, who was, be it remembered, then the representative in England of a country held by the King in joint sovereignty. Thus the first official use of Downing Street was to house a German Minister—obviously

¹ "A sad story, and grieves me to the heart" (*Pepys's Diary*).

the "Hidden Hand" that has haunted Downing Street ever since.

But the atmosphere—let Mr. Maxse mark!—was fatal to the German Minister. Count Bothmar died within a year!

It was then (1732) that George II offered the house to his great Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, who was at that time living in St. James's Square. But Sir Robert was in too perilous a position to accept a personal gift from the Crown. So he persuaded George II to join to the gift of "Number Ten" the famous condition—since attached also to the gift of "Chequers"—that the house should belong in perpetuity to the "First Lord of the Treasury." That was the only official name under which the Prime Ministers of England were then—or indeed until quite recent years—known to the Crown.

Thus it was that "Number Ten" became the home of the Prime Ministers of England just at the beginning of real Cabinet rule; and it has remained ever since attached to that high office.

Prime Ministers neglected Downing Street for a large part of the nineteenth century—but they have returned of late years, and the last five Premiers have resided there.

But it is clear that the street and house are now both too near the centres of ferment and storm to make a desirable place of residence for the man who bears the weight of rule over our Empire.

The time may come, and may even now be within sight, when the position may become too perilous and exposed for our Prime Ministers. The murmur of Scotland Yard may become a veto.

In that case, let it not be given over to the house-breaker! Let us preserve "Number Ten" as a precious relic of our past English life; as the Americans preserve the house of Abraham Lincoln at Springfield and the home of George Washington

at Mount Vernon ; as even we, less thrifty of the past, preserve the houses of Dr. Johnson and Thomas Carlyle.

For there is not a room at " Number Ten " that has not seen great events. The house is sacred to the past. There is scarcely a nook or a cranny that does not carry the whisper of great crises and great decisions.

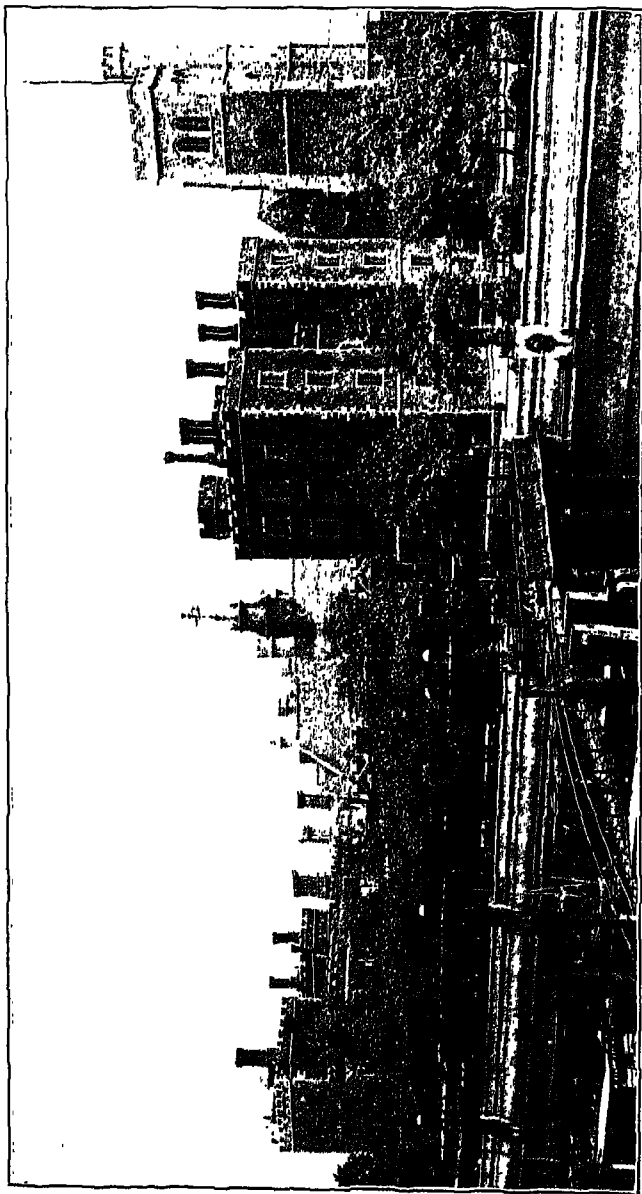
It is a central shrine of our race. Let us preserve it as such.

III

The Archbishops and Lambeth

“The State will die, the Church can never die.”

Becket: TENNYSON'S Drama.



H. Nelson King.

LAMBETH PALACE: from the River Thames.

III

The Archbishops and Lambeth

GAZE across the Thames at Westminster from the Middlesex bank—from the Embankment Gardens or Grosvenor Road—on any clear day : you will observe, behind the screen of trees, between the pavilions of St. Thomas's Hospital and the high chimneys of Doulton's factory, a lower group of buildings, irregular, faded and antique, which speak of other times and other memories.

They are the towers and halls of Lambeth Palace : the ancient London home of the Archbishops of Canterbury, strangely stranded between the modern healers and the modern makers—an island of calm amid the roar and bustle of South London.

Seen from the terrace of the House of Commons, those mellowed buildings—their brickwork darkened with a century of smoke—break the skyline with irregular, fretted contours. Standing there, face to face with Westminster, they speak of a time when Church shared with State the ruling of the nation. They front the civil power across the river with a challenge not even yet quite withdrawn.

Those placid towers and walls have had a tremendous past. Threatened by kings, stormed by mobs, seized by Parliamentarians, Lambeth has drawn the lightnings. It has had many fiery escapes. It still survives.

There the Primate of All England, first Peer of

the Realm, still with precedence next to the Throne, works and labours, governing the Church in the mornings, and often in the afternoons crossing to Westminster to become a voice in the guidance of the British realm.

The forms of the past survive—aye, and some of the realities.

Roll back the long scroll of time across four centuries to those tremendous years of the early fifteen hundreds, when the Archbishops of Canterbury still really ruled the State and wielded in England the thunderbolts of Rome.

The whole perspective changes.

Looking across the river in this our vision, we see Lambeth Palace with a new clearness. England seems a brighter place to live in.

The air is lighter, clearer. The Thames flows in wider flood. Its emerald waters, limpid and transparent, spread out with the tide over the marshes of Kennington and Lambeth.

“Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.”

North of the Thames, the waters creep up between the red-roofed houses of the suburb of Westminster, and behind the great grey-roofed Hall of Rufus, standing not far from the long, lofty Abbey. All these great buildings stand out more nobly—in this our dream—and they speak of greater pomp and power. The river itself—this sixteenth-century Thames—teems with splendid, gorgeous life.

Great barges, glorious in colour, are being rowed by liveried oarsmen up and down the broad stream—the barges of powerful Ministers and mighty ecclesiastics. The rowers cross themselves as they pass the image of St. Thomas à Becket, which stands in a niche below the towers of Lambeth.

One very magnificent barge, its golden cross

shining in the sun, slips down the river from Lambeth to Whitehall. It leaves the water-gate at the eastern end of Lambeth Palace, and crosses the flood, easily propelled and guided.

It is the barge of the Archbishop, still mighty in State as in Church, second only to the King in power.

Tell your waterman to rest on his oars, and you may perhaps chance to see His Grace, magnificent in gold and purple, sitting in the stern of his barge. He is going across the river to speak face to face with the King in his palace of Whitehall; perchance to speak sternly to him of his duty to the Faith of which that King is still the chief Defender.

We let the Archbishop go on his way, and hearing some cheerful sounds from the palace, we ourselves tell our waterman to steer to the stairs, and we mount the steps. It is easy to find the Palace. For it stands, in this our dream, solitary amidst its fields: not lost, as now, in the surrounding buildings, but emerging alone above the green trees, backed by happy orchards and pleasant meadows. Its embattled gateway gives a touch of majesty to the buildings; and we approach with a certain awe—for, after all, the Archbishop has still the power of life and of death.

But to-day we are welcome. For it is a day of open board at the palace. The porter bows to us and invites us within. An almoner in brilliant scarlet robes beckons us to the steward's table. Not the high table, where sit peers, bishops, canons and abbots in their robes; nor the next table, where sit the hungry, black-coated chaplains and friars; but the gentlemen's table, if you are, as I take it, well dressed and well-seeming, and perhaps beruffled and besworded.

Thus welcome, there you sit enjoying a free meal, at the expense of Mother Church; wondering why anyone should be such a fool as to be a heretic!

All that glory has gone. The pomp of the old archbishops has vanished like the "baseless fabric of this vision." Those great prelates

"were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air."

Yet though much has been taken, much is left. The old embattled gateway of Cardinal Morton still stands out against the sky, its two stalwart, thick-set towers endowed with a certain rough English strength; lofty, five-storied, with the substantial chamber over the gateway now used for storing records. There is just a touch of rough, mediæval humour in these two portals—like Dean Swift's two doors, one for the big dogs and one for the little.

The great Cardinal built his gateway in those far-off days of the needy, thrifty Tudor king who suffered from that

"Eternal lack of pence
Which vexes public men."

Morton invented the great idea of the Fork. Axe we should call it now—but the Cardinal had a better word, and a more deadly weapon. If you were poor, it was clear that you must have saved by your poverty; if you were rich, why, then—you were rich! In any case, tax you! Capital or income—what did it matter? They did not worry about such nice distinctions in the days of Henry VII—and they did not wait for death duties. That great gateway—four-square, merciless, robust—stands for the Cardinal's Fork.

Step inside, and look round. In front of you rise the high brick buildings of Laud's lodgings, and on your right the lofty Renaissance structure of the Great Hall, now the Library. It was built by Christopher Wren for Archbishop Juxon, who found the old hall in sad decay. The Roundheads had used

it for a prison. To-day it is the noblest of our ecclesiastical libraries, with its lofty oak roof, its great "bays," and, outside, its beautiful "louvre" standing against the sky, its noble lower buttresses, and its characteristic intermixture of brick and Portland stone.

Move to the right and enter the great Quadrangle, with the curious lamp in the centre. On your left are the Library and the Dining Room. In front is the great modern palace, a substantial house built in 1828-30 by Blore, in place of the quaint old manor-house where the archbishops lived up to that time. That was a rambling, red-brick building; this is a stately, commodious mansion, large-windowed and high chimneyed, with great reception rooms for the hospitality of modern archbishops.

Pass through the great mansion to the left; thread the passages of the Laudian lodgings—the chambers built by Laud for the bishops, and still used as their London residence by the prelates of Oxford and Winchester. Look in at the little, oak-panelled, Laudian sitting-room; and now come to the most enthralling of all the buildings that make up Lambeth.

For you are at the foot of the high, grim structure known for centuries as the "Lollards' Tower."

"Childe Harold to the Dark Tower came."

Yes, for it is indeed a dark, forbidding tower, that fifty feet or so of grimy, crumbling brick, with the strange little bell-croft near the summit. It was built by Bishop Chichele to help him manage the heretics and unruly people of his day; and it helped.

It is worth while to mount the steep stairs and enter the "Lollards' Prison." It is the topmost story of the tower.

You climb the high, bare, spiral stone staircase, and you stoop to enter a low doorway.

Dimly through the gloom you descry a thick oaken door studded with iron nails. The old locks have gone; the door opens easily to the curious visitor of to-day. There was a time when the locks held, and that door was rarely opened, except to take out a corpse or to thrust in food. For this is London's Castle of Chillon. Here our Bonnivards perished.

"They chained us each to a column stone,
And we were three—yet, each alone;
We could not move a single pace,
We could not see each other's face."

But there were more than three in the "Lollards Tower" at Lambeth.

Enter the room, and take note. You find yourself in a little space some twelve feet long by nine broad. All round the room, placed at fixed intervals, are iron rings attached to the walls, just large enough to hold a human limb. There are three on the south wall, four on the west, and one on the north. The walls and ceilings are wainscoted throughout with rough, oaken boards. In the far corner is a hole in the floor which made for human relief. In the north and east walls there are small windows—one looking out on St. Paul's, the other on Westminster Abbey. Strange vistas!

On the boards are stains which—some say—are blood; on the walls are marks which—some say—are burnings. There may be fancy in such surmises.

But there is no fancy in the voices which speak to-day from the walls, voices of appeal and yearning, voices of valour and consolation; voices of pity and fear; voices of prayer and agonized thanksgiving.

Scratched and burnt into the wood, carved and scribbled by failing hands, these voices are like sighs from the dead past. They reach us across the centuries.

The sacred and beautiful sign of I.H.S.—*Jesus Hominum Salvator* ("Jesus the Saviour of Men")—is the master note of these appeals. It abounds here as in the catacombs of Rome, and surely dates the agony of this room right back past the Reformation to an earlier persecution, which can only be that of the Lollards.

The early period of these human woes is also proved by the mediaeval script—

"I.H.S. cyppe me out of all el compene. Amen,"
which is, in our modern English—

"Jesus keep me out of all evil company. Amen."

Another prisoner has scratched—and we can see his face shining like an angel's—

"I.H.S. est Amor Meus."
("All my Love is in Jesus.")

Another, probably a French Lollard, signs himself Petit Joganham, and has written—

"Deo sit gratiarum actio."
("To God be Thanks.")

Think of that! To God be thanks! While he sits there, chained and captive, scratching with his poor manacled hands! Such is the power of faith!

From the long-buried past these sentences come to us like whispers, the last unconquerable messages of men who, in the inscrutable order of things, suffered and died for what was best in them.

It is not so much the famous, conspicuous martyrdoms that have power over the imagination as these lost, hidden tragedies of little men whose very names have become part of the darkness.¹

¹ A vexatious controversy has arisen as to the correctness of calling this Tower the "Lollards' tower." Mr. Ducarel, writing in 1785, approved the name. Mr. Cave Brown doubts it. There was another Lollards' Tower in the City, close to Old St. Paul's Church, mentioned by John Foxe in his *Acts*.

So much for this little prison tower, the grimmest survival in London of the age of martyrdom ; the little private torture-chamber kept by the prelates of a Church very different from the kindly institution now presided over by Dr. Davidson.

The link between that old Church and the present Church is supplied by Laud, into whose Chapel we will now descend.

Laud's arms are over the western door of the Chapel, and his handsome screen still divides the ante-chapel from the place of worship. The Puritans during their long occupation did not destroy the screen, or Laud's arms ; or his episcopal chair, which stands on the right at the entrance of the Chapel. His altar railings were taken to Addington, but they are now back round the chancel. They also survive.

The Puritans, however, smashed the windows utterly. They had a peculiar detestation for stained glass. That was a pity, because Laud had devoted much innocent time, thought and money to restoring the windows from an earlier decay.

"I found them," he said, "patched like a beggar's garment." The Puritans left them torn to tatters.

Laud was a little man born in a great time. He had one good idea—order and discipline in worship. But the world was not ready for it. The strife was still engaged : garments were still being rolled in blood. The time for order—for clean surplices and stoles—had not yet come.

So Laud was nipped between the contending factions, and being neither Catholic nor Protestant, he died without a tear from either. He perished for a compromise.

and Monuments. That was destroyed by the Fire of London. The above description, carefully checked on two occasions, will dispose of the controversy. The inscriptions show beyond reasonable doubt that the prisoners were Lollards. There were two Lollards' Towers.

In the hall of the present mansion of the archbishops there is the shell of a tortoise with an inscription on brass attached to it. That inscription records the fact that that tortoise belonged to Laud. It was placed in the garden at Lambeth by Laud in 1635. It was still there in 1753, when it was accidentally killed by a gardener at the age of 118. It seems quite natural that Laud should have kept a tortoise. He was really just a human tortoise himself. But he put out his head from his shell, and lost it!

From the Chapel we pass to the Dining Room, a lofty chamber, once the Guard Room of the palace, Forty pikes carried by Laud's guards in that room are still hanging in the Archbishop's front hall. The Dining Room is used daily for meals by the archbishop's family, just as the Chapel is used twice a day by the archbishop for worship.

But the principal interest of the Dining Room to-day is that it is a picture gallery of the English archbishops—one of the finest portrait galleries in the world, a gallery of noble portraits of great subjects—great men painted by great artists.

The only gallery that competes with this gallery at Lambeth is the gallery of the Deans of Canterbury in the Deanery at Canterbury.

Dean Wace, showing me that gallery, some months before his death, remarked on the fact that the expressions on the faces of the deans varied with the ages in which they lived. They were pious in the fifteenth century, puzzled in the sixteenth, pugnacious in the seventeenth: and placid in the eighteenth. So it is with the archbishops whose portraits hang round the great Dining Room at Lambeth Palace.

First come the ascetic faces of the early archbishops, when the rulers of the Church were dedicated to the monastic life. Then the faces that reflect

that long period of mental doubt, when the Church of England swung between the power and the pomp of Rome and the searching, thunderous appeals for truth that came across the sea from Northern Europe—a time of doubt and agonies, fears and divisions, strifes and furies. The mitre gives way to the biretta; the biretta to the square velvet cap; the cap to the wig, which was common to archbishops throughout the eighteenth century, and worn even by Archbishop Howley at the Coronation of Queen Victoria.

A few portraits stand out—the florid, hopeful face of Laud painted by Van Dyck in the days of Laud's prosperity; the wan, powerful countenance of Warham, the head of the Church just before the Divorce—the face of a strong, honest man who, if he had lived, would have spoken truth and dared the devil—or even Henry VIII.

Then there is the little authentic portrait of Cranmer over the mantelpiece—not the conventional, bearded portrait in the corner, for that is certainly not Cranmer.

The small portrait gives you the face of the man who conformed only to be condemned, who acquiesced only to bear the penalties of independence. One of the greatest tragedies of the world—the man who suffered martyrdom without being a martyr!

Let us look a little more closely at this strange man, and his strange story.

Cranmer's giddy rise and terrible fall must always fascinate all who are touched by mortal things. This son of a little shopkeeper up in Nottinghamshire would, indeed, have died in his bed but for a strange mischance of good luck.

He was on holiday at Waltham Cross, tutoring the sons of the Cresses' family, when—portentous event!—Henry VIII arrived in the town, enraged to madness by his failure to obtain his divorce, and ready to accept any device that could be suggested.

Cranmer, the little Cambridge don and tutor, met the agents of the Divorce that evening, advised them to appeal to the University, and caught the ear of the desperate King.

Within a day he had become the King's counsellor. Within a month he was the royal envoy to the Emperor. Within a year Warham was dead, and Cranmer, the little Cambridge don, the private tutor of Waltham Cross, was Archbishop of Canterbury.

He was put there only to carry out the Divorce ; and—what was more fatal—he knew it.

He stood on a slippery slope of immense height. He was among the thunders and the lightnings of Europe in Reformation. But he was not the man to defy the lightnings or the thunders. He was ready to slide down the slippery slope of acquiescence and indulgence. So gradually he became the King's glove—a velvet glove without a hand of iron !

The King died, and his son, Edward, the Protestant "tiger cub," died after him. Mary came to the throne, and the fires of Smithfield were lit. Mary was not likely to forgive. For Cranmer was the man who had ruined her mother ; Cranmer was the man who, to please her father, had branded her as "Bastardess."

Then there fell on Cranmer one overpowering fear—the fear of death by fire. It was a fear that played a great part in those days. That fear of the fire—it was the most powerful motive force in England in the sixteenth century. Cranmer gave way to it, fled from it, cowered from it ; but Mary pursued him, relentless, remorseless, implacable.

Then Cranmer turned.

" Just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed !
So I was afraid ! "

From that moment Cranmer became great. He

became invincible ; once he had defied fear. Death could not touch him.

That last scene in St. Mary's Church at Oxford, when Cranmer, in his beggar's robe, and with shaven head, stood by the pillar on his little platform in face of the multitude and the clamouring friars—when he confessed all his fear and all his shame—when he recanted his recantations, and stood, stark and bare, his soul freed, before his persecutors—is one of the greatest scenes in our island history.

"They were powerless," says Foxe in his account of the scene, "because they could not kill him twice."

That, after all, is the ultimate privilege of man. He cannot be killed twice.

Then through the resounding aisles of St. Mary's ancient church there rang that immortal vow, that last defiance of the power of pain and torture :

"And forasmuch as my hand offended, writing contrary to my heart, my hand shall be punished therefor ; for may I come to the fire, it shall be first burnt."

Cranmer was as good as his word. When he came to the fire, at the spot where Ridley and Latimer had perished before him, he did not shrink from the bitterest tribute of agony, the last payment of fiery pain.

"He held his hand so steadfast and immovable . . . that all men might see his hand burnt before his body was touched."

The whole man caught the courage of the hand and showed to all time the power of man's "unconquerable soul."

"His body did so abide the burning of the flame with such constancy and steadfastness that, standing always in one place without moving his body, he seemed to move no more than the stake to which he was bound . . . using often

the words of Stephen, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,' in the greatness of the flame he gave up the ghost."¹

So Thomas Cranmer, coward and opportunist, at last retrieved his soul.

The "counterfeit presentment" of the ruling archbishop, Dr. Randall Davidson, is happily not yet added to this portrait gallery. Dr. Benson and Dr. Temple are in the corridors—that bold, genial presentment which Herkomer painted after Temple's death and carried up the palace stairs in his own hands, shouting, "I've done it!" It is, indeed, truer than life.

Dr. Davidson's portrait, painted by Sargent, young, hopeful, ruddy-faced, stands on an easel in the Drawing Room. The subject himself shows it to you with a quizzical, impersonal air. "They say that it's good!" he says. The years have taken their toll since that portraiture.

But Dr. Davidson, although aged seventy-six by the calendar, is still stalwart and upstanding. "Faint but pursuing." "Twenty-one not out" is his score of years at Lambeth, for he has been there since 1903. Of his Church he can at any rate say that it still is. He has carried it, with shrewd moderation and common sense, through many storms. Like Talleyrand, when asked for his record during the Revolution, he can answer, "J'ai vécu" ("I have remained alive") The Church of England, like the English monarchy, remains alive. That is the real miracle of these days.

He has made Lambeth a central home for the Christian Faith in these lands. He has not merely talked Christian reunion; he has lived it. That is his great record.

He speaks from the home of fifty archbishops,

¹ *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, otherwise known as *The Book of Martyrs*, 8 vols, 4th edition, 1877, vol. viii.

where the voices of the past seem to echo from the walls, and the very passages seem to be haunted by the whispers of those who have gone before.

But this is not a day for any bold leader of men to be held back by the voices of the past. To them he has to say:

“ Call me not so often back,
Silent Voices of the dead,
Towards the lowland ways behind me,
And the sunlight that is gone !
Call me rather, Silent Voices,
Forward to the starry track
Glimmering up the heights, beyond me
On, and always on ! ”

The grey towers and minsters with which the Church has scattered England ; the sound of their bells and the music of their chants ; the great offices of comfort and hope in the moments of human joy and sorrow,—these must not only call us back.

They must call us

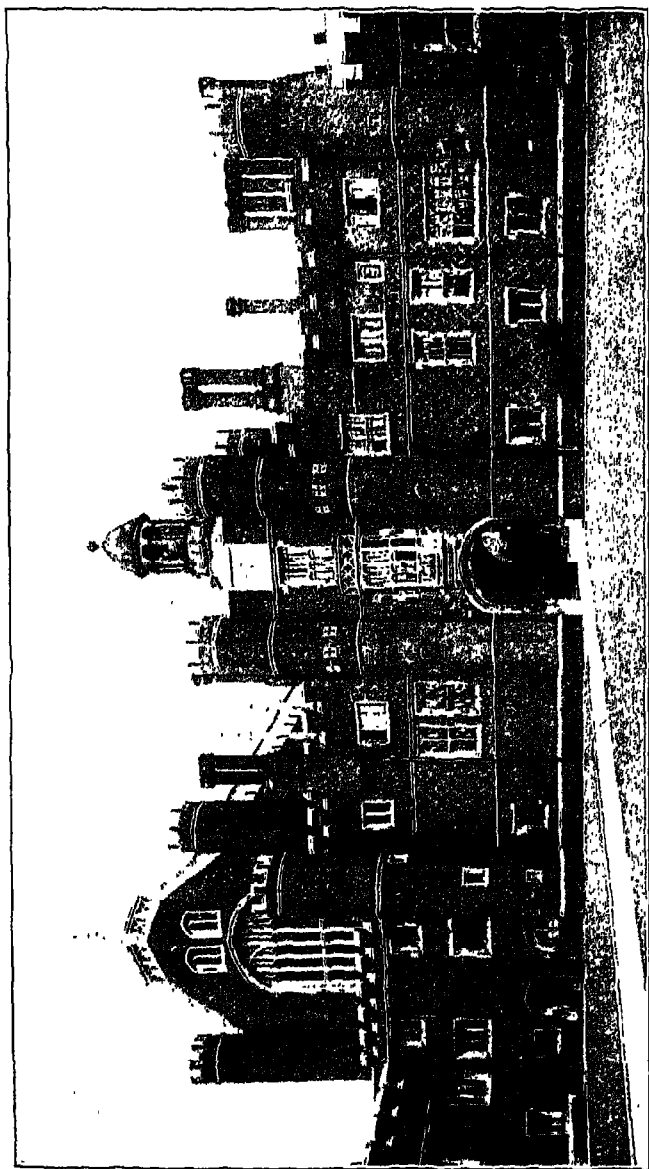
“ Forward to the starry track,
On, and always on ! ”

IV

Wolsey and Hampton Court

" At length his sovereign frowns—
At once is lost the pride of awful state,
The golden canopy, the glittering plate,
The royal palace, the luxurious board,
The liveried army, and the menial lord."

SAMUEL JOHNSON.



H. Nelson King.

HAMPTON COURT PALACE : The Clock Court.

IV

Wolsey and Hampton Court

THE great Tudor palace known as "Hampton Court," built by Cardinal Wolsey for his pride and comfort in that beautiful bend of the river at Molesey, still shines along the banks of the silver Thames, little touched by the hand of time. Gazing across the water from the Surrey shore we still see the fairy vision of towers—the shining roofs and tapering chimneys, rising amidst the glory of its glowing, spreading gardens.

The faded brickwork is touched with the tint of autumn, and the quadrangles that echoed to the tramp of soldiers resound now to the footsteps of gazing multitudes. But Hampton Court survives. The building remains our most perfect existing image of that old Tudor England, with all its splendour of architecture, wealth of garniture, and ample setting of field and river.

The lovely little private chambers of Cardinal Wolsey, with their exquisitely panelled walls and delicately carved ceilings, have at last been thrown open to the general eye of the world. They look out over the Dutch Garden and the Queen's Bower, as serene in their outlook as in their interior, and they give one some impression of Wolsey's delight in beautiful surroundings.

Empty to-day, as they are, of the gorgeous furniture and sumptuous hangings which framed the rooms in Tudor times, they still bring home to us

a real picture of the great luxury with which the Tudor men loved to surround their lives.

In these rooms Wolsey lived and worked. Here he received ambassadors and princes. Here he dreamed great visions of power. Here he schemed for the papal tiara. Here he was beaten in all his scheming by one frail, lovely woman—Mistress Anne Boleyn.

Yet how great was that power while it lasted ! In the little panelled ante-rooms through which we walk to-day the greatest waited on Wolsey's will. Men came from the ends of Europe to see him, and went away without an audience. Here men had to endure from Wolsey the arrogance of a tyrant and the pride of a Cardinal. Here they schemed his doom.

And yet Hampton Court Palace, whether in these little rooms or in the exquisite courtyard and lovely buildings, remains to-day a monument of Wolsey's genius. Henry VIII inhabited it—but Wolsey built it. It has survived all his other dreams—this, and the college that he built at Oxford. In the beauty of these buildings this man still stands out as the greatest builder of English mansions.

The story of how Wolsey began this work is very simple.

He secured the old manor of Hampton in 1515, with the intention of building for himself a country house a little removed from the pressure of State affairs. The thirteen miles between Hampton Court and London seem a trifle to-day. But in those days, before stage coaches, thirteen miles was a very formidable distance. Every journey in those days had to be performed on horseback ; and the annals of Wolsey's day are filled with descriptions of the vast processions of retainers which accompanied the Cardinal on his visits to Hampton. He rarely went down there without an attendance of some

four or five hundred gentlemen and servants.

Wolsey was a true modern. He was a man of the people, raised to power by the chance favour of a monarch. He brought into those high places the great breath of energy and resource which comes from new birth. Once he had set his heart on a thing, he spared nothing.

It was in such a spirit that he schemed and planned the Palace of Hampton Court.

Wolsey's original palace largely survives to-day, and is still the glory of the old Hampton Court as we know it. The western front, with its great breadth and mellow beauty, is entirely Wolsey's, as are also the Base Court and the Clock Court. All the lodgings round those courts, now occupied by the families of servants of the State who have deserved well of their country, were built by Wolsey.

The towers were topped by him with leaden cupolas, that shone like silver in the sun. The cupolas have gone, but the towers remain intact. The leaden cupolas were capped in their turn with golden vanes, which must have given a glittering effect to the whole palace. The beautiful chimney-shafts of to-day, with all their various forms and shapes—square, round, and octagonal—are faithful copies of the old chimney-shafts of Wolsey's day. In every detail Wolsey spent freely and magnificently, bringing workmen from every part of England to adorn his building. Like the architect of Tennyson's *Palace of Art* he could say:

"I built my soul a lordly pleasure-house,
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell.
I said, 'O soul, make merry and carouse,
Dear soul, for all is well.'"

After building Hampton Court, Wolsey made merry and caroused. Life there was one succession of masques, dances, and banquets. So thronged was this new house of his, that Wolsey had perforce

in his turn to build another retreat at Esher in order to retire from the retreat which he had built before.

For we must grasp the fact that through nearly twenty years—between 1510 and his downfall in 1529—Wolsey was practically the ruler of England. The young king cared little for serious affairs. Henry VIII was still in love with Catharine of Aragon, and with all the sport in which he delighted. The “will-o’-the-wisp” of his fancy had not yet drawn him into the marshes of public life. Wolsey reigned supreme. He was both Chief Minister and Lord Chancellor. There was no man to compete with him in power.

Hampton Court during those years vied with Windsor Castle as the centre of British sovereignty. Wolsey kept adding to its glory. He hung its walls with splendid tapestries. He filled its rooms with vessels of gold and silver. There were 280 bedrooms for the entertainment of strangers alone, besides the lodgings of the household. His own private rooms were decorated with hangings of cloth of gold. He employed Sir Richard Gresham—Sir Thomas’s brother—to buy for him in Flanders every fresh product of the looms of that wonderful country, and he brought from far-off Italy all the latest designs.

His gold and silver plate glittered and glowed in all the chief rooms. This treasure alone is estimated to have been worth £1,500,000 in modern money. Wolsey always drank out of gold or silver vessels himself.

He had a splendid choir for his chapel. He had five hundred retainers and one hundred and sixty personal attendants.

It is a common idea that England in the sixteenth century lagged far behind Venice and Italy in point of comfort. But it is quite certain that England in her greatest houses at that period—and especially

in Wolsey's—was fully as comfortable as Venice or Italy : or, in some respects, as England to-day.

Hampton Court, for instance, was well-warmed and well lighted. It was elaborately drained, and fresh water was brought from the springs at Coombe Hill by leaden pipes running under the Thames. Cardinal Wolsey suffered much from ill-health ; and the great towns of that time resembled cesspools rather than modern cities. He designed Hampton Court as a health resort, and it is a proof of his great genius as a builder that there has been no serious epidemic at Hampton Court, with all the teeming population of that great palace, for the last four hundred years.

Here, then, Wolsey reigned and forgot Henry. The King paid visits to Hampton Court—and made notes. He went back to Windsor and found it a chilly place in comparison. He complained that Wolsey's choir was a great deal better than the royal choir at Windsor ; and Wolsey seemed proud of it ! He had not yet tasted the bitter plant of a monarch's jealousy.

Even so, Wolsey might have survived if he had had the tact and good sense to make terms with the old aristocracy. There were only two powers in England at the moment—the King and the nobles. Wolsey chose to despise the nobles, and he paid a price for that contempt. All the records show that Wolsey made that great mistake of successful men : he became inaccessible to humbler people.

Skelton the Puritan expresses the British fury which seizes on an Englishman when he is left " on the door-mat." He says :

" Sir, we must dance attendance,
And take patient sufferance.
For My Lord's Grace has no time nor place
To speak with you as yet."

There is a remarkable description of one of

Wolsey's greatest displays at Hampton Court Palace in that most readable book, *The Life of Cardinal Wolsey*, written by his secretary and gentleman usher, George Cavendish.¹

The occasion was a banquet to the French ambassadors, a notable event because it was probably the climax of Wolsey's magnificence. Wolsey had schemed the banquet in order to draw closer the alliance with France which he was always pressing on Henry VIII as part of his foreign policy.

Once the banquet was decided upon, the whole of Hampton Court was turned upside down for the occasion.

"The cooks wrought both day and night in divers subtleties and many crafty devices. . . . The yeomen and grooms of the wardrobes were busied in hanging of the chambers with costly hangings, and furnishing the same with beds of silk and other furniture. . . . Then the carpenters, the joiners, the masons, the painters, and all other artificers necessary to glorify the house and feast, were set at work."

When the French Embassy arrived at Hampton Court after a day's hunting at Hanworth, they were taken to the chambers which had been prepared for them. Nothing had been spared for their reception. Great fires were lit in the chambers and goblets full of wine were set there to sustain their spirits until the supper was ready.

Then they were ushered down to the banqueting rooms. First there was the "waiting chamber," "hanged with fine arras" and "furnished with tall yeomen." All round that chamber were tables

¹ *The Life of Cardinal Wolsey*, by George Cavendish, his Gentleman Usher. With Notes by Samuel Weller Singer, F.S.A. London, 1827. For nearly two centuries this book was supposed to have been written by Sir William Cavendish, one of the founders of the Devonshire family. But in 1827 the original manuscript was discovered, and it was conclusively proved to have been written by Wolsey's secretary.

"banquet-wise, all covered with fine cloths of diaper," and covered with gold and silver plate.

The sixteenth century delighted in these displays of plate, and Cavendish gives a description of a special cupboard six shelves high, full of gilt plate, "very sumptuous and of the newest fashions." There were "two great candlesticks of silver and gilt, most curiously wrought, and lights of wax as big as torches burning upon the same."

None of this plate was used for the banquet, for which there was sufficient besides. It was simply a matter of display. The walls also were hung with plates of silver and gilt, with lights burning in them.

There was "a great fire in the chimney, and all other things necessary for the furniture of so noble a feast."

Everything being prepared, Wolsey's officers caused the trumpets to blow to warn the ambassadors to supper. The guests were conducted to the banquet. Then "their service was brought up in such order and abundance, both costly and full of subtleties, with such a pleasant noise of divers instruments of music, that the Frenchmen, as it seemed, were rapt into a heavenly paradise." Here I may remark that, as one of the results of the visit to that heavenly paradise, most of them afterwards had to be carried to bed!

Cardinal Wolsey was a master of drama. Throughout the first course of the banquet his seat was empty—he was "conspicuous by his absence." He left his guests alone until their spirits were awed by the great devices and inventions of cookery in which the Tudors excelled. Cavendish gives us descriptions of those devices which prove that the cuisine of that age far surpassed anything aimed at now.

There was an image of "Paul's Church and

steeple"—the old church of Eastminster afterwards burnt in the Great Fire—"in proportion for the quantity as well counterfeited as the painter should have painted it upon a cloth or wall." There were "beasts, birds, fowls of divers kinds and personages, most lively made and counterfeited in dishes: some fighting, as it were, with swords, some with guns and crossbows, some vaulting and leaping; some dancing with ladies, some in complete harness, justing with spears."

Cavendish notes specially "a chess-board subtly made of spiced plate, with men to the same; and for the good proportion, because that Frenchmen be very expert in that play, my lord gave the same to a gentleman of France"—with a packing-case to put it in!

Then, when they were all duly impressed, Cardinal Wolsey made a dramatic entry. He came into the great banqueting hall booted and spurred, as if he had just come from a journey; called for a chair, and sat himself down in the midst of the company, "laughing and being as merry as ever I saw him in all my life."

But Wolsey ate nothing of the gorgeous banquet. He sat there like a man who was taking his rest on a pilgrimage, and Cavendish tells us that he afterwards went to his rooms and took a simple repast.

Such is the glimpse given of that magnificence which was Wolsey; and we are no longer astonished that King Henry grew uneasy at a pomp which outshone that of royal state.

King Henry was informed of this banquet at Hampton Court, and managed that the French ambassadors should have a still finer feast at Greenwich. At that point Cavendish's powers of description break down.

"I do both lack wit in my gross old head," he says helplessly, "and cunning in my bowels to declare

the curious and wonderful imaginations in the same invented and devised."

Such a rivalry could have but one ending. The King, after all, had the power. There was no reality behind the stucco frontage of Wolsey's magnificence. He had no friends. The melancholy descriptions of his downfall elaborated for us by Cavendish would have more interest if Wolsey had shown more courage. But Wolsey, faced with the sharp, bright axe of Tower Hill, practically died of fear—and death from fear is scarcely a noble end.

There is one last, penetrating glimpse of those days given us in this narrative of Cavendish.

After Wolsey's death at Leicester, Cavendish had to go to Hampton Court to tell the King of the Cardinal's death. He gives us a very vivid picture of the scene in the gardens of Hampton Court.

On his arrival he found the King shooting at a mark in the gardens. For Henry was passionately fond of the bow.

The death of Wolsey did not at first seem important enough to draw the Tudor tyrant away from his sport. Cavendish was kept waiting.

The forlorn secretary describes how he leaned against a tree in "a great study" thinking of the tragic end of his master. Suddenly he was clapped smartly on the shoulder by one who approached him from behind. It was the King himself; and he roused Cavendish from his brown study with a very boisterous shout. Cavendish turned and, seeing that it was the King, fell on his knees. But Henry called him cheerfully by his name and bade him rise.

"I will make an end of my game and then I will talk with you," said Henry, and, going back to the shooting-ground, he stopped the sport. He handed his bow to the yeoman of the bows and walked towards the palace.

Then came a characteristic touch. As Henry moved towards the palace he met his friend, Sir John Gage, and, falling into earnest conversation with him, forgot all about Cavendish and the Cardinal. He passed through the garden postern-gate—which probably stood on the south-eastern side of the palace, not far from the river—and, closing it behind him, left Cavendish outside, forgotten and forlorn.

Cavendish waited a while, and then the gate opened and Sir Henry Norris, another friend of the King, came out and called Cavendish within.

Cavendish was taken up to Henry's rooms, and found his monarch clad "in a night-gown of russet velvet, furred with sables." For they dressed well in those days!

Cavendish knelt, and for a whole hour or more he poured out to the King the whole story of Wolsey's end. Henry VIII casually remarked that he would "liever than twenty thousand pounds that he had lived." But with instant contrast to this pious utterance, there came the quick, sharp inquiry—where was the fifteen hundred pounds that Wolsey carried with him in his last journey to death? For that was the last little pocket of treasure left to Wolsey from that immense fortune of which Henry had ruthlessly stripped him, piece by piece, during the last year of his life. Henry's interest in Wolsey was now concentrated on his greedy lust for the last remnant of the Cardinal's wealth.

Cowed at the presence of royalty, Cavendish abjectly surrendered to his monarch the name of the priest to whom Wolsey had handed over the money for safe-keeping.

"Is this true?" said the King sharply.

"Yea, sir," said Cavendish.

"Well, then," said the King, "let me alone, and keep this gear secret between yourself and me, and

let no man be privy thereof ; for if I hear any more of it, then I know by whom it is come to knowledge."

With that cruel menace Henry closed the interview and dismissed the faithful servant of Wolsey's fallen fortunes.

We are not now astonished at the famous melancholy words which Cardinal Wolsey uttered to Sir William Kingston before his death: "Well, well, Master Kingston, I see the matter against me how it is framed ; but if I had served God as diligently as I have done the King, he would not have given me over in my grey hairs."¹

Wolsey brought this doom on himself.

The evidence of the Italian observers is quite clear. They all agree that Cardinal Wolsey, in the days of his power, set himself up to be far greater than the Pope. Nothing like his pomp had ever been seen outside Rome. "He is seven times greater than the Pope himself," says the Venetian Ambassador. "He is omnipotent," says Erasmus. All dispatches passed through his hands. No business was transacted without his consent. He was the Cardinal Richelieu of England. He was more powerful under Henry VIII than Cecil under Elizabeth.

No king would have stood this—least of all, Henry. For Henry was like a tiger cub who, in his first youth, deceives the whole world by his playful habits. As he grew older the lust for blood began to grow, and the gleam of the tiger's passion came into his eye.

One day, so it is recorded, perhaps on one of

¹ Famously dramatized by Shakespeare in the lines:

"Had I but served my God with half the zeal
I served my king, he would not in mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies."

Henry VIII, Act III, Sc. II.

those magnificent visits to Hampton Court, King Henry VIII said to Cardinal Wolsey:

"Why have you built for yourself so magnificent a house at Hampton Court?"

Perhaps the question was accompanied by a savage gleam. But, at any rate, Wolsey must instantly have caught sight of the threat behind the question. For he answered with swift readiness:

"I have built it, Your Majesty, to show how noble a palace a subject may offer to his Sovereign."

Perhaps Wolsey scarcely intended that he should be taken at his word. It is not to be thought that he so lightly parted from that immense storehouse of treasures.

But Henry was a man who did take you at your word.

"Thanks!" was the upshot of his reply, and within a few months Wolsey was in flight, and Henry was installed in Hampton Court Palace.

Immediately that Henry entered into possession of the palace, he put his stamp on every part of it. He had his own arms carved on every coign and corner. He defaced every trace of the unhappy Wolsey, the builder of the palace. He raised new galleries. He added the tennis court. He re-decorated the palace on a colossal and splendid scale, bringing in new sculptors and painters. Full and minute records of all these changes exist to-day in the Record Office, and every workman can be identified. The Tudor royal arms are still on the walls.

Then Henry began to bring his wives; and Hampton Court Palace became a half-way house to Tower Hill.

Of all these wives who passed, in succession of waning honeymoons, through the chambers of Hampton Court, the one still most intimate to these lovely galleries and courtyards is Katharine Howard.

The Haunted Gallery, indeed, is one of our national institutions, and he would, indeed, be possessed of a heart of granite who attempted to destroy a faith so venerable.

Every visitor to Hampton Court can follow the steps of Katharine, the girl-wife, from the point where she left her own rooms to run down the gallery. She hoped to reach that little room of Henry's known as the "Holiday Closet," where a few days before she had prayed with him in pious union. Perhaps she hoped to touch his heart. Who knows?

Katharine Howard had been confined to her rooms a day or two before on the evidence conveniently provided by that obliging ecclesiastic, Archbishop Cranmer. Sitting there, in her chamber, it is probable that Katharine remembered the swift doom which had befallen Anne Boleyn. The vision of the lifted axe passed before her eyes; the dusky block; the masked executioner who came from Calais.

Stung by such visions, she hammered at her locked door, broke through the panels and emerged into the passage. The soldiers in the gallery were taken off their guard, and she had almost reached Henry's "Holiday Closet" before they realized what was happening.

Then those soldiers woke to action, seized, perhaps, with an equally desperate fear of savage punishment. They laid hold of that little, frail slip of humanity that still looks out on us so pitifully from Holbein's canvas, and carried her, wailing and shrieking, down the Long Gallery back to her rooms. Meanwhile, the good Henry was too deep in his orisons to be drawn off to his domestic troubles.

Not one eyelid stirred—so it is said—as the cries of Katharine Howard reached Henry's ears. Only a few days before he had knelt along with her

and thanked God "for the good life he led and trusted to lead with his wife." Now he knelt and prayed alone. He went on praying steadily while the latest of his wives was carried screaming back to her doom.

Let us pass from these sombre galleries to more cheerful scenes. One of the most fascinating spots in the whole of Hampton Court is the Tennis Court, which was built by Henry VIII, immediately after he took over the palace from Cardinal Wolsey.

You walk down the little corridor along which the kings of three centuries have strolled to go to their sports, and you find yourself looking through the trellis-work at a large and beautiful court where privileged players play to-day the same game that kings played in the sixteenth century—the true old English tennis, the game of kings. It was a favourite sport with our ancestors, and if we come to examine the reason why Henry VIII was so popular in England, it is always his supremacy in sport.

For England loves a sportsman, and Henry excelled in every possible English sport of that day. He was a great rider, and a magnificent shot with the bow. Trained in this court, he became the greatest of tennis players. While he played it, the game kept in check his tendency to fatness, which, in the end, proved his doom.

We note the imprint of his golden crown all over the walls, and standing there to-day we can almost hear his boisterous laugh as he plays the ball. We watch his sturdy, robust English figure; and we note that, after each merry stroke, he glances up at the Ladies' Gallery.

Other monarchs have lived in Hampton Court—Elizabeth, Charles, Cromwell, and William III, and even the Georges. But they seem mere shadows, in comparison with Henry.

For he dearly loved Hampton Court. It was

the darling of his heart ; and he was more faithful to it than to any of his wives.

But, after all, Henry took it from Wolsey.

Wolsey built it. Wolsey adorned it.

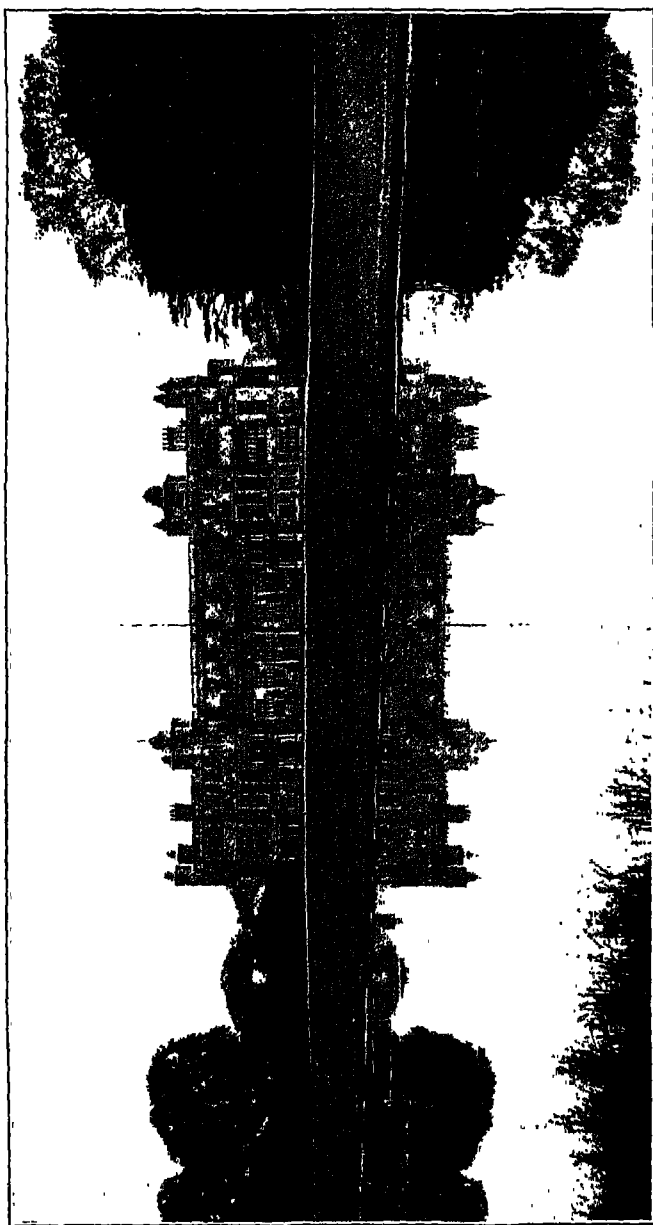
It was Wolsey's at the time of its first freshness and most enchanting beauty.

It is still Wolsey's to-day—Wolsey's Hampton Court !

V

Chancellor Audley and Audley End

" Luckily for Audley, he has not much attracted the notice of historians."—CAMPBELL.



H. Nelson King.

AUDLEY END : The River Cam in Front.

V

Chancellor Audley and Audley End

JOURNEYING northward through Essex by the great Eastern Road, you reach a clearing in the woods and find yourself face to face with a broad and spacious mansion, fronted with smooth lawns and fringed by the gentle, slow-moving Cam. The house smiles at you with its great face of large, broad-mullioned windows. It is crowned with a splendid head-dress of green copper cupolas and tapering Tudor chimneys. It is backed with thick woods, covering the hill that shelters the pleasant little town of Saffron Walden. It is one of the most renowned and beautiful of our large English mansions, splendidly framed in exquisite English scenery, rich and green as the forest of Arden.

This mansion looks boldly out on the world, with a certain noble majesty. It shines with light. For if the windows of a house are its eyes, then this house is a veritable Argus. The stone front seems almost an accident. The only real break in that shining front of Audley End seems to come in the two lofty, classical porticoes supported by Ionic and Corinthian columns. If the windows of a house can smile, then indeed is Audley End a house of smiles.

The mansion has fallen on quiet days. The broad lawns are silent and empty. Many of the rooms are sheeted with those cretonne coverings which seem, in houses, like shrouds of greatness. Yet once Audley End was the palace of a king ; and it was built

by one of the greatest of English families. For two centuries it was a centre of social life in the county of Essex. Even to-day it still commands the pious devotion of the Nevilles.¹

The builder was the Earl of Suffolk, son of that great Duke of Norfolk who was one of Henry VIII's greatest Ministers and just escaped by a few hours being his last victim. The Earl of Suffolk was married to the daughter of Audley, Lord Chancellor of England, Henry's most pliable tool. The ground on which Audley End is built was the reward of Audley's pliability.

Charles II took Audley End over. He proposed to buy it, but never paid the purchase-money. Thrifty Queen Anne gave it back to the fifth Earl of Suffolk. With a truly royal gesture, she forgave the owners the money she owed them. On those terms the old family resumed occupation. Perhaps it is this episode of splendid condescension that gives to Audley End its royal touch.

For as you pass through the rooms you cannot shake off the impression of a palace. The house still contains a royal room and royal pictures—notably a remarkable portrait of George II. The royal arms surmount the mantelpieces. An air of royalty pervades the empty chambers. The house seems to be awaiting the return of a king. The majestic hall, with the hanging banners and the world-famous carved screen of the Italian Renaissance—it is the hall of a sovereign; the mighty reception-room, with its splendid windows and its noble pictures—it is the audience-room of a monarch. The beautiful guest-rooms, with the exquisite Adam ceilings and walls, the Pompeian decorations and delicate mouldings—they are the resting-rooms of royal visitors. Those long galleries and boudoirs that surround the

¹ Audley End is occupied by the Earl of Braybrooke, the head of the family.

eastern side of the great house—they are for the promenading of queens. This luminous building, flooded all day with glorious light, it is a royal mansion.

Yet the man of this mansion is not a king. He is Audley, who succeeded Sir Thomas More as Lord Chancellor by the simple process of sending him to the scaffold. His reward was this abbey—the manor of Walden. Spoils were going—and he claimed his share. Judas was not to be left without his blood-money. Lord Chancellor Audley, then, begged and won this land, and lived in the old manor which stood on this spot by the river Cam. Hither he came in the intervals between his ruthless tasks. For he was for a long time King Henry's chief Minister—and that was a busy and a dangerous post. Small wonder that he died here before his allotted time, worn out with infamous deeds.

For history has not much good to tell of Lord Chancellor Audley. The great Lord Campbell, in his famous and racy *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*, gives a vivid sketch of Audley's life and doings. It is little else than a record of shame. Here is his quick and fearful summary of that black career :

"He held the Great Seal for a period of above twelve years, during which to please the humours of his capricious and tyrannical master, he sanctioned the divorce of three queens—the execution of two of them on a scaffold ; the judicious murder of Sir Thomas More, Bishop Fisher, and many others, who, animated by their example, preferred death to infamy—the spoliation of the Church, and a division of the plunder among those who planned the robbery."

Let us take one instance of the sort of trials which, in the time of Henry VIII, passed as justice. Take the trial of Bishop Fisher, one of the holiest men of his age, whose only fault was that he was not quite cunning and agile enough to step the

slippery ridge between the conflicting views of the King's supremacy.

Audley issued under the Great Seal a special commission for the trial of both Fisher and More, placing himself at the head of it. He began with Fisher: because he expected to obtain a conviction more easily against the simple-minded old prelate. Fisher took his seat at the bar, too weak to stand. He was accused of "traitorously" attempting to deprive the King of his title. He was alleged to have uttered the words: "The King our Sovereign Lord is not the Supreme Head on earth of the Church of England."

Fisher was allowed no counsel. But the extraordinary infamy of this trial was that the only evidence consisted in the disclosure by the Solicitor-General, Rich, of a conversation conducted between him and Fisher in his cell at the Tower under strictest seal of confidence. Not only confidence, but confidence backed by the King's word of honour.

Rich, it turned out—according to Fisher's own undisputed statement—had come to Fisher in the Tower from the King on a secret message. His Majesty sent to say what a good opinion he had of Bishop Fisher and how sorry he was for his trouble. Then Rich opened on the question of the Supremacy, and said that the King had sent him in that secret manner "for better satisfaction of his own conscience," to know his full opinion on the matter. Fisher objected that under the new Act of Parliament anything he said might get him into trouble. To that Rich answered that the King willed him to assure him, upon his honour, and "on the word of a King," that whatever he said, no harm should result. So the messenger—who was a Minister of State—gave his solemn promise that he would not mention the Bishop's words to a living soul, save the King alone. Then, and only then, did Fisher

speak and utter the honest opinion which was now cited against him as high treason.

Rich did not deny this. He pleaded the King's orders for his infamy. It was one of Henry's own particular plots. Rich pleaded that however true Fisher's statement might be, it was no defence in law for the breach of the statute.

Audley ruled that this was so. He laid down the amazing proposition that even if Fisher had uttered his opinion at the request of the King himself, it was still treason. Nothing could save him from death except the King's pardon—which he would not get.

Beaten on this, Fisher, who was fighting for his life, made a point of law on his side fatal to the whole case against him. A treason trial required two witnesses. Here was only one.

Audley and the judges replied that as this was a case where the King was personally concerned, the rule did not apply. In other words, the King was above the law. Where he was concerned, the law was of no avail. This was the legal and official destruction of law: the substitution of personal will.

The jury, of course, saw that any show of independence would swiftly send them to the block along with Bishop Fisher. So they brought in the verdict—"Guilty"—and Audley, framing himself to a solemnity of conscience, passed on the great and noble Fisher the horrible sentence of mutilation and shame then usual in cases of treason.

Audley, of course, was simply obeying orders. Henry VIII himself had passed judgment on Fisher. For on hearing that Pope Paul III had sent the English bishop a Cardinal's hat, Henry had exclaimed: "I will take care that he has not a head to put it upon." That was the real judgment and sentence—compressed in one royal phrase.

Thus we see that Audley was but the docile and

bloody servant of a bloody master: and the lands of Audley End were the reward for those services.

As Lord Chancellor he bent justice to his master's will, and turned the Courts into ante-chambers to the slaughter-house. As Speaker of the House of Commons, he had before turned that ancient body into an accomplice of crime.

He was, indeed, a very convenient weapon for a monarch in a hurry. He became an expert at manufacturing evidence. He perverted judgment. He was ready to divorce, re-marry, or execute at will. He was the very man required by that bull-necked, fleshly, wilful person who still looks out from the canvases of Holbein.

After his hangman's work was over he did not hesitate to claim his reward. It was in 1538, after an orgy of executions, that Audley began to press for his pay. He had been made a Peer after the birth of the Prince Edward in 1537; and being an Essex man, from Colne, he had chosen the title of Baron Audley of Walden in the county of Essex. Then he began writing to Thomas Cromwell, the "hammer" of the monasteries. In one letter he describes very prettily a visit to the infant Edward, but ends by asking for two abbeys in Essex. That is a cover for his real design, which he reveals in his next letter. He then asked right out for the site and lands of the dissolved abbey at Walden.

His reason is stated quite clearly and plainly:

"I have in this world susteyned greate damage and infamie in servinge the Kynge's Highness. This grant shall recompens" (*sic*).

It is blackmail. He demands his hush-money.

Henry frankly recognized the justice of the claim. He knew that his Lord Chancellor had provided him with the bad law and unjust judgments which had driven to death so many noble persons. He was

grateful to him as the butcher of Anne Boleyn. So he gave him, not merely Walden, but also the site of a priory in Aldgate, where Audley built himself a beautiful town house. Then Henry made Audley a Knight of the Garter. He never did things by halves. Thus encouraged, Audley went on with his hangman's work. He devised the special machinery of attainder by which his own benefactor, Thomas Cromwell, was done to death without a chance of defence. He helped to divorce that obligingly plain-faced little Dutch woman, Anne of Cleves. His was the voice that persuaded an English Parliament to perpetuate the cruel infamy of massacring little Lady Katharine Howard by Act of Parliament without trial. Truly, he paid his price for the manor of Walden.

But, like all Henry's Ministers, while wielding the flail of terror, he was himself flogged on from behind. He saw before him the fate of Cromwell. His health was undermined by fear. It was all very well to be the servant of a tiger: to supply the tiger with his daily meal; but what if the tiger should, in due course, choose to feed on him too? It was such daily fears that shattered lives in those days of blood. Audley now began to suffer from that strange decline of vitality which is one of the symptoms of a reign of terror. At the end of the Session of 1544, after conferring on the King one last boon by passing the Act of Succession, Audley retired to the manor of Walden, and took to his bed.

He was mortally stricken. Some mysterious threat had struck him down. The King could not wait. So on April 21st, 1544, he sent the Great Seal to Henry, and died on the 30th of that month, in the fifty-sixth year of his age.

It is not a lovely picture—this life of Audley. He was one of the few Englishmen who have been found in our long history ready to become the complacent

tool of a tyrant. It forms a strange commentary on the special pleading of the school of Froude, who would have us believe that that tyrant was a benevolent patriot king. It was not a pleasing basis on which to found a new order : this morass of mud and blood : of treachery and brutality : of lust and greed.

But let us try to take a broader view. The days of Henry VIII were, after all, the days of the English Renaissance ; and the men thrown up by that great social upheaval were not likely to be either saints or martyrs. Saints and martyrs enough there were in those days. But they were not thrown up. They were thrown down. It was not the saints and martyrs who founded the great material fabric of modern England. It was the courtiers and adventurers.

The old England of the Middle Ages had vanished in the furnace of that prolonged civil war which raged round the colour of two flowers. That great struggle of the Wars of the Roses practically destroyed the old nobility of England. Then, on the top of that great change came the sudden sweeping away of all that splendid fabric of privilege and beauty—the far-spreading abbeys and monasteries of mediæval England. Thus, by a double revolution, the page was bared of its old script.

The scroll thus became ready for the writing of the new age. England could not remain empty. These lands could not go desolate. The two great Tudor Henries had destroyed two great feudal fabrics—the nobility and the clergy. Where the earlier Henries had failed, these had succeeded. But the Tudor monarch could not rule alone over a devastated land. Things could not remain at that point of zero. The new era had to come, and new rulers. So Henry VIII passed from destruction to construction. He now had to find his instru-

ments for reorganizing England, and he found them in the new men of the new era.

Audley was one of those men. He was the son of a nobody. So was Wolsey. So was Thomas Cromwell. They were all self-made men—the sons of butchers, bakers, or middle-class lawyers. For the first time in England, the career was open to the talents; and the man who held the key was Henry VIII.

We perhaps do wrong therefore in thinking of Henry merely as a Bluebeard and a despot. He was that; but also more. He destroyed much—but he also remade. To England as a whole he stood as the pioneer of a new world—a daring figure, splendid at sports, a master of scholarship; above all, a man who could stand in the gate against the great nobles and clerics who oppressed the people. The fact that he had a merry way with the women perhaps made him no less regarded. Probably the most welcome of all his acts was the dissolution of the monasteries, which had declined from the ideals of the Middle Ages into centres of greed and arrogance.

That ruthless act of statecraft provided Henry with a vast spoil. He was no believer in national possession. He deliberately employed that spoil to create a new nobility who would support him against the old. Audley was just a type of this new nobility—perhaps a little more ruthless than the others; but, on the whole, a fair average. He took his share of plunder and founded a family. That family still goes on. But he had to pay for this in "scot and lot." Henry VIII was not a man to give anything for nothing. So it was that the prize for Audley End was to be seen in the dismembered limbs and lopped-off heads of nobler men. The great palaces of the new order arose on the corpses of the old.

That was all three centuries ago, and many generations have lived and flourished at Audley End since those old, bad days. The badness of them is now forgotten, and the descendants of those very men are faced with another new age. Let us hope that they will obtain more mercy than those whom their ancestors plundered.

Meanwhile Audley End still stands, fronting its beautiful lawns; and the Cam still moves with its gentle current across the old English landscape where the monks once plied their gentle craft. The swans still "float double, swan and shadow"; the English peasant still ploughs his land. Here in Eastern England it seems as if, after all the centuries, the only truth that holds is that of the old French saying: "The more it changes, the more it is the same thing."

At any rate, those adventurers were supremely wonderful builders. In vain to-day do we attempt the "first fine, careless rapture" of this Tudor domestic architecture. We are driven again and again face to face with this mystery of that age—what made them build so well? How explain Audley End?

They had spoil. They spent it freely. From all over the world artists and mechanics poured in to help in the spending. The great splendour of the Italian Renaissance, then in full flower, sent wafts of scent and colour across Europe. Italy captured England; but England partly recaptured her captor. So we had the art of a hot country wedded to the cold climate of England; and the domestic "perpendicular" was born.

They overspent and overbuilt. They soon found that they could not live in these tremendous palaces. In building they had scattered the very means of living. The first thing that the actual residents of Audley End had to do was to begin to unbuild.

"It is too big for a king," said one royal visitor to Audley End; and it was certainly too big for a subject—that first building. There are engravings of it. The great and splendid structures swept right down to the banks of the Cam. There was a great maze of courtyards and quadrangles. It was not a mansion, but a city of mansions. The builder had overreached himself in his masterful splendour of fancy and plan.

So the whole of the first front—the front on the Cam—was torn down. The east side of the courtyard became the actual face of the new building. It was really better so. Audley End has gained by the loss. For the builders of the Renaissance period often, in their splendid way, kept their best hidden away. They loved to reserve their finest ornamentation for the inner, intimate life of the little family Courts for which they erected these houses. Audley End has gained by that destruction a rare and exquisite frontage of English lawn and gliding river.

But, alas, the glory has waned! I have spent a day wandering round the rooms of Audley End—and I have ended with a sense of melancholy. The silence oppresses. Man's best works always seem to outlive man himself. He goes hence: his pride remains. The builder lies beneath the earth: the building stands. A new race comes, and wearies of the pomps of its ancestors. The past mocks and perplexes the present.

These halls are full of memories. Stand in the Great Hall of Audley End, and go back in thought to 1852. There, in that year, a mighty banquet was held beneath those banners. It was the coming of age of the flower of the Neville flock. But two years later the shadow of the Crimean War fell on the house, and two of the Neville sons were killed. The shadow still rests. The angel of death has

passed, but you still hear the rustling of his wings. It is so, on behalf of their country, that the flower of our race is consumed. England, like Saturn, devours her own children.

To-day the great house seems to be waiting and listening. The vast screen still supports the Minstrels' Gallery; but the gallery is empty. The pictures still line the walls: they seem to be looking for some new event; perhaps listening for the foot-fall of some happier day.

Is there, in the future, to be no use for these great mansions of England? Have they no mission left? Are they to survive only as remembrances, defying the truth that Dante and Tennyson sang:

"A sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things."

If so, perhaps it would be better to turn their stones to the uses of humbler dwellings; and let their final glory be that they have provided where the poor may lay their heads.

But that would be to waste and scatter the most precious treasure of these buildings.

Greater than any monuments, they form some of the greatest achievements of man. For each of these mansions embodies an ideal. It is an ideal of how life should be lived.

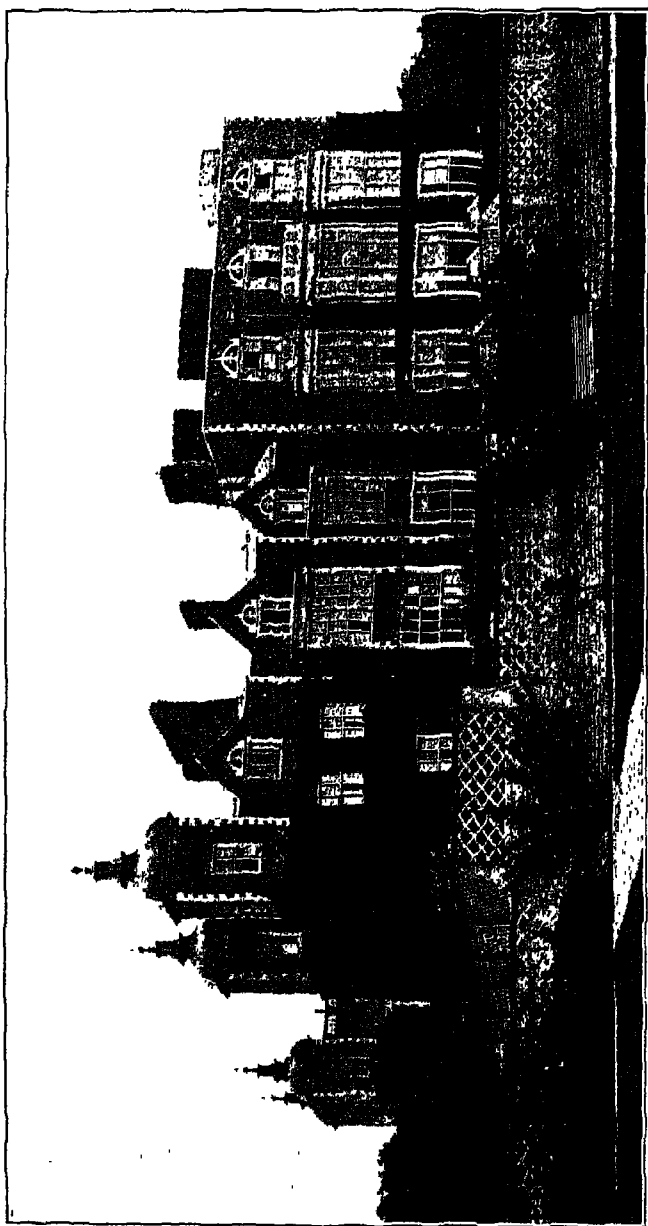
Perhaps we shall never see life again lived on so splendid a scale as in these dwellings. Man has passed on. But there are other needs and other wants, even more pressing. The new collective life of the crowd requires new centres: it requires light and guidance from the past. Perhaps when the present course is run, these great mansions of England will enter new careers. They may yet become, with their splendid chambers and their glorious windows, the lanterns of the new England.

VI

The Cecils and Hatfield

" Here he lives in state and bounty,
Lord of Burleigh, fair and free,
Not a lord in all the county
Is so great a lord as he."

The Lord of Burleigh : TENNYSON.



London Electrotape Agency.

HATFIELD HOUSE : The East Front.

VI

The Cecils and Hatfield

ABOUT twenty miles due north of London, just off the Great North Road and close to the village of Hatfield, there stands on a slight rise of ground a mansion that is a palace. Unfenced and unshielded, in the midst of its park and gardens, it looks out on the world with a simple, majestic confidence.

It is Hatfield House, one of the greatest products of that passion for splendid domestic architecture which swept over England with the peace of the Tudors and the spoiling of the monasteries. Peace gave the occasion: spoil the means—here, as at Audley End.

Hence the rise of so many noble, affluent mansions, beautiful both without and within, of which the survivors are still the chief jewels of rural England.

Of all those buildings, Hatfield House is still easily the premier. Premier in beauty, though not first in time. For although essentially Tudor, Hatfield House was built in the days of James I. It has a Tudor front, but a Jacobean back; it stands between the First and Second Renaissance of English building. It is one of the last master-pieces of the Tudor peace.

For such houses were the product of the central calm established in England by the first Henry Tudor after the ravage and terror of the long civil strife. They expressed the new trust in a

strong central government. For the first time Englishmen could sleep in peace. Armed neighbour was no longer the foe of armed neighbour. The moat and the portcullis could go. The thick walls and castellated ledges could go also. The mediæval castle perished with Bosworth Field. For a whole century the wealthy Englishman could indulge his passion for sumptuous houses and capacious halls. So Hatfield House was built.

But before Hatfield House there was a mansion that was really a palace, and the pageant of 1924 has reminded us of its history. For the fragments of this palace still remain: close to the noble gateway which opens on the grounds from the town of Hatfield. They were used as stables for many generations; but they have been restored to something of their old semblance by the pious care of the present Marquis of Salisbury. He has done well, for this palace was one of the most interesting and remarkable buildings of old England; and it played a most vital part in our history.

For Hatfield Palace became, at its prime, the home and refuge of the young Princess Elizabeth, and preserved that noble young woman from the envy and fury of her half-sister. It was originally the palace of the Bishops of Ely: a stalwart and enterprising race of men who, with their monks, developed Hatfield in all its old glory, not only building cloisters and chapels, but also digging ponds and planting vineyards. The traces can still be seen.

But the day of the bishops was waning. When the great Bishop West died in 1533, Henry VIII chose to regard that as an act of God; and so he seized the palace and took it for his own. It was a way that Henry had with ecclesiastical property.

Having seized Hatfield Palace, Henry made ample use of it. He employed it as a kind of

dumping-place for his embarrassing offspring. Or we will, more gently, say—a spare nursery. Thither, after the death of the mother, he sent the young Edward, the son for whom he had longed. There exists in the vaults of Hatfield to-day a beautifully written letter in Latin written by Prince Edward to his father, imploring him to come and see his only son. Very charmingly does the poor boy assume that his royal father was probably too much occupied to attend to one so humble as himself! It was true.

The young Edward grew to love Hatfield Palace, where he could pursue the studies for which he was so fatally impassioned, under the guidance of a new and more obedient Bishop of Ely, Richard Cox, who did not disdain to teach French and Latin to the son of his disinheritor. Edward found there peace and protection from the fierce, deadly feuds that surged round Whitehall and the families of Henry's wives.

Princess Elizabeth—the child of another dead wife—was sent by Henry to join the son—and Hatfield House to-day possesses also some exquisitely written letters of that gifted child. Here she studied and grew to be the scholar-queen who afterwards astonished Europe with her learning and amazed Oxford with her Latin. She, too, grew to love Hatfield as a harbour of refuge away from the storms of that terrible Court, her formidable father, and her terrible sister. Thus Hatfield Palace enabled Elizabeth to grow up in peace and calm. No small boon to this kingdom!

The palace in which these poor neglected orphans grew up has mainly disappeared. That vast and beautiful structure, with its multitudinous courts and chambers, has vanished. All that remains is a long, red-bricked, barn-like building, sadly stripped and bare. Yet in its day this hall must

have been one of the most magnificent in England. Henry VIII loved it : and he knew a splendid house when he saw one. It was the favourite home of his children. It continued to be visited by James I, the first Stuart king ; and would have gone on being used by him if his eye had not fallen on a more desirable mansion.

That story is part of English history. In a fatal hour the younger Cecil, Sir Robert, the son of the great Burleigh, had invited the King to stay at Theobalds, one of those splendid houses which his father had built out of the spoils of the monasteries. No sooner seen, than desired. No sooner desired, than asked for. James royally intimated to Cecil that, on the whole, he preferred Theobalds to Hatfield. He graciously offered an exchange. It suited his royal will to take a new country house built in the latest modern manner, and to hand over to Cecil the faded glories of Hatfield Palace.

The younger Cecil had no choice in the matter. The fate of Wolsey was still quite fresh in memory. Once a king asked for your house, that house was really his ; and it was only a question of how you should express your consent. Tower Hill and the "bright shining" axe loomed not far behind.

So Robert Cecil decided to make the best of a bad job. He vacated the glories of Theobalds—now, too, vanished off the earth—and went to Hatfield. But Cecil was a Tudor modern. He could not live in a bishop's palace. So very calmly and resolutely he set about building a new Theobalds at Hatfield—new in style and outlook—on the little hill slightly to the east of the palace. He would, of course, be able to use a good deal of the brick and woodwork of the old palace in building the new.

It was thus that the new Hatfield House—the

house of to-day—came into being—built by the younger Cecil, Robert, the first Earl of Salisbury, the evicted of Theobalds.

It is worth while to linger for a few minutes in that old bare, barn-like hall, still so like a stable: the last remnant of the old Hatfield Palace. For it was in this hall that Edward and Elizabeth dined and played; and it was here that Elizabeth the young queen held her first Royal Council—that famous Council in which she announced to the astonished nobles of Mary's Court that she had chosen the plain Protestant, William Cecil, as her chief Minister. It was the first of those daring acts of independence which made Elizabeth so great a queen. Standing there, at the top of this hall, this young girl of twenty-five boldly handed her seal of trust to the shrewd commoner who was as yet untested and untried. It was there that Elizabeth stood and uttered that bold estimate of the character of the first Cecil which she never had cause to recall:

"This judgment I have of you—that you will not be corrupted by any manner of gifts."

Many harsh things have been said and written about that first Cecil, the great Lord Burleigh, the builder of Burleigh House. Macaulay did not love him—the historians have mostly followed Macaulay's lead. He bored them. It is his misfortune that most of his vast correspondence has survived, and to-day fills the shelves and drawers in the beautiful library on the western side of Hatfield House. He wrote about 3,000 letters a year, which means nearly ten a day. Those letters have been scanned and sifted by a Royal Commission that has been sitting for a whole generation. Blue books are still coming out. No wonder the historians are bored! Yet the tremendous test of those published letters has stood good. It justifies the claim of the Cecil

family to say of their founder, Lord Burleigh, what Tennyson said of Wellington :

“ Whatever record leaps to light,
He never shall be shamed.”

Hatfield Palace and all its surroundings whisper of Elizabeth. Hatfield House is full of her portraits—side by side with the Cecils; and the trees of Hatfield Park, where she read and dreamed, sibilate her memory in every breeze.

Walk across that park, through the sparse forest of antique trees, to a spot half a mile away, where a dead stump of an old oak is guarded by a low railing.

The Princess Elizabeth was sitting by the side of the great oak that grew there on a day of early winter—November 17th, 1558—reading a book. She saw a horseman approaching across the heath from the direction of London. She knew that her sister, the Queen, was desperately ill, and half crazed in mind. It was by no means impossible that Mary, in her last agony, might attempt to prevent Elizabeth's succession by process of summary execution. Such things happened easily in those days. Elizabeth expected the worst.

But she was a brave woman. So she rose as the horseman approached, and calmly awaited his coming. As he reached the Princess the man leaped from his horse, and knelt upon the ground.

“ I greet Your Majesty ! ” was all he said—and she knew the whole truth.

Elizabeth stood quite silent for a few moments, and then she said slowly to the messenger—this amazing young woman of only twenty-five years : “ This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.”

Elizabeth reigned and died. The great Lord Burleigh sank into his grave, worn out with his

many burdens. The little red-haired Scotch monarch came prattling and fussing into our English politics. Lord Burleigh's son, Robert, succeeded his father as first Minister. He lost Theobalds to the Scotch king. He proceeded to build Hatfield House. He planned and built on a large scale. The house was begun in 1605; it was finished in 1612—seven years in all for the building.

Robert laboured immensely at his task: for the men of those days were master-builders. He acted as his own architect. He employed many fine skilled English workmen—his mason, Conn; his carpenter, the famous Robert Lyminge, who afterwards built Blickling Hall; his steward, Thomas Wilson. We know the names of these English workmen, and we honour them. But they were not architects.

Cecil probably purchased his designs from famous artists in London. But he adapted them himself. At his busiest time, he always eked out leisure for Hatfield. He dared greatly as a builder. It was he himself, for instance, who designed the Renaissance centre with Tudor wings which is the astonishing triumph of the south front. He toiled greatly—and the Record Office to-day still tells of his labours. He bought all the materials himself. He procured the stone from France and Northamptonshire. The beautiful wainscoting which is the glory of the interior—the lovely staircase carvings—were designed for him by the great Janivere. It is still to-day the most perfect example of decoration in English oak.

But England was Cecil's real care: and James his anxiety. He had only his spare time to give to Hatfield. That, perhaps, explains why there are strange, wilful irregularities about the house—wings unequal in size or length: details unfurnished: daring innovations that seem to be the result of

passing moods. He built Hatfield in the intervals of guarding England.

Man builds and Fate unbuilds. *Homme propose : Dieu dispose.* Robert Cecil, now Earl of Salisbury, was never a robust man. The many portraits at Hatfield show him wan and weak, "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." Nature had made him badly. It was the pretty habit of the monarchs who accepted his brilliant services to laugh at his physical weaknesses. Elizabeth called him "The Elf." James, more brutally, nicknamed him "The Pigmy," "The Beagle," the "Little Man." His enemies, who were legion, spoke of him as having a "wry neck, a crooked back, and a splay foot." He was a very different man from that splendid, broad-chested Englishman, his father. But he had blue eyes; and he was good company. He had the Cecil tongue.

He was designing a new entrance to the house. But that enemy of statesmen, the gout, had seized upon him. He was worn down with many toils, Hatfield House not the least. In April, 1612, he journeyed, like William Pitt at a later time, to Bath. He craved for the waters. But they did him no good. He grew worse instead of better. A great longing came over him. He felt death approaching, and he longed to see Hatfield once more before he died.

It was too late. He was suffering from terrible swellings in his legs and knees. The journey made him grow rapidly worse. He reached Marlborough with great pain, and then he could go no further. He was carried into the parsonage house at Marlborough on May 24th, 1612—and he died there at two o'clock in the afternoon. He no longer needed a palace.

His body was embalmed and brought to Hatfield, and there buried, on June 9th. He desired and

obtained a quiet burying. He wrote in his will words that might form the epitaph of many a statesman :

“ I desire to go without noise and vanity out of this vale of misery : as a man that has long been sated with terrestrial glory.”

Robert Cecil, then, is the Man of this Mansion, Hatfield House. He and his father, Lord Burleigh, that other great builder of mansions : they and all the Cecils who have lived there since, and built up the traditions of one of England's greatest families. They are the Men.

What is it that has kept this family so conspicuous in our records ? What feature in the two founders, father and son, held the regard of two such different monarchs as Elizabeth and James ?

The answer is that they were both willing to be Ministers. They did not aim at supreme authority. They were content to be servants. Service was their new and especial limitation of desire. It was this readiness to serve that made them so precious to kings. We take it for granted to-day—this readiness to serve. But it was not ever so. If we now possess this type of service so prominently among our public men, it is because it was moulded and fashioned by the first two Cecils. Both worked to place their sovereign on the throne. Both served their sovereigns faithfully when on the throne. Neither tried to snatch the Crown. They made monarchs, but did not unmake them. That was a considerable change in our English story.

The common feature of the two Cecils, then, is that they subdued their ambitions to the Crown—and the nation. It has been the feature of the family ever since.

“ *Sero sed serio* ”—“ slowly but seriously ”—that is the Cecil motto : and, on the whole, it suits the

family. Steady work. No dash or brilliancy; no perilous spirit of adventure. That was the leading idea. Such a type was required in that great, restless, ebullient age of Elizabeth and James—when every English sailor fancied himself a chartered pirate; and every Falstaff became a highwayman. The elder Cecil was the nation's check on men like Drake and Hawkins: the young Cecil on Raleigh. Once the peril of Spain was over, England had to curb her tiger cubs.

As with the Men, so with the Mansion. Throughout Hatfield, as you wander through the halls and presence chambers, you have the feeling of something large, solid, substantial, trustworthy. You see it in the Great Hall, the broad staircase, and the lofty galleries and reception-rooms. Always there is the same impression of formidable strength and tranquil power.

So it is with the Men. The career of the great Lord Burleigh advances with steady strides to its goal. Except for one flash of romance, in his youth, when he married the daughter of his wine-seller at Cambridge, the elder Cecil treads with an almost superhuman steadiness along the high road of life. A fine scholar, a good speaker, a just administrator, he never sold his judgment for gifts. He walked with cool head along a giddy ridge between the parties of Edward and Mary: and he survived. Then he hitched his wagon to a star. He helped Elizabeth to the throne; and she made him her Minister. His was a perilous choice. But he proved right, and he had his reward. Elizabeth never deserted him.

It was a rare combination—that of Burleigh and Elizabeth. Two beings so strangely contrasted, so unlike both in their virtues and their faults. There were times when Elizabeth, with her shifting fancies and changing moods, drove Cecil to the verge of

revolt. There were moments when Cecil's slow caution angered Elizabeth to white heat. But they easily forgave one another. For each had the greatness to realize that the other was necessary to England.

So they held together, this wonderful pair, through the subtle perils of Mary Stuart's plottings, and the fierce, open assault of the great Armada.

Sometimes Elizabeth saw further than Cecil: often Cecil saw deeper than Elizabeth. Cecil was quite incapable of Elizabeth's adaptability: Elizabeth of Cecil's caution. They supplemented one another. She supplied the wit and the suppleness: he the saving salt of English truth. But through it all they both served England.

England—that is what Hatfield stands for to-day: England—and service:

“What have I done for you,
England, my England?
What is there I would not do,
England, my own?”

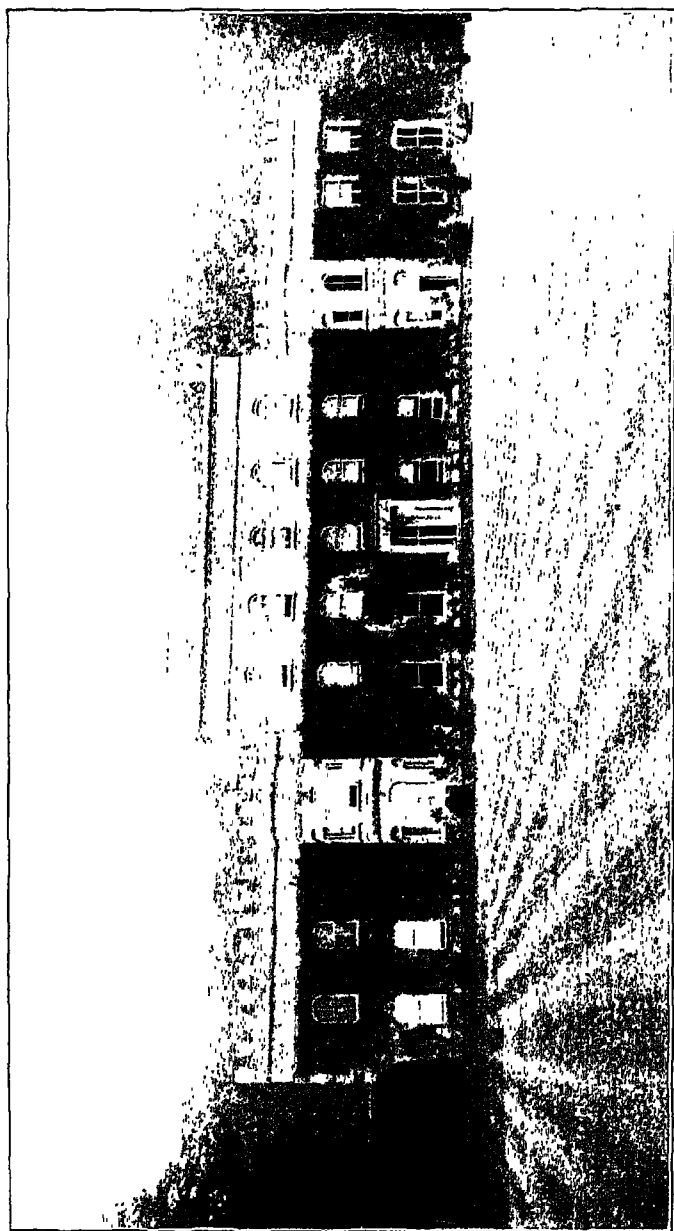
That is the spirit of Hatfield.

VII

John Hampden and Hampden House

“ The single note
From that deep chord which Hampden smote,
Will vibrate to the doom.”

England and America (1782): TENNYSON.



H. Nelson King.

HAMPDEN HOUSE : The East Front.

VII

John Hampden and Hampden House

IT was on a day of early May—a day on which a belated spring had suddenly burst into a flash of summer—that I first bicycled through a country bridal white with blossoming cherry trees to visit Hampden House and the little village of Great Hampden.

Hampden House, the famous home of John Hampden, "The Patriot," lies in the very heart of England. It stands on a ridge of the Chilterns, in the centre of the gentle, smiling, fertile country of Buckinghamshire.

You approach it from Great Missenden, along the Wendover road. You turn left at a signpost and mount by easy gradients, through a wood of ancient beech trees, part of the primeval forest.

At a turn of the road you first see the great house, broad and substantial, castellated and comfortable, crowning the rise of ground. It stands at the end of a vista between a long and handsome avenue of beeches—the vista which, so tradition says, was cut by Hampden's grandfather, Griffith Hampden, to please his visitor, Queen Elizabeth.

The house speaks to-day of long, assured peace : of central English calm. Yet it was the home of a great fighting man ; the most resolute of all the great defenders of English liberty, the man who, first of all, said to English kings, " Thus far and no farther ! "

There is a famous passage in Macaulay's great essay—one of that brilliant galaxy of prose stars with which the great Whig writer first threw the glamour of heroism round the days of our English civil war :

"The nation looked round for a defender. Calmly and unostentatiously the plain Buckinghamshire Esquire placed himself at the head of his countrymen, and right across the face and across the path of tyranny."

It was here, at Hampden House, that the "plain Buckinghamshire Esquire" lived—that "Esquire" who became in turn a great jurist, a splendid Parliamentarian, and a daring soldier. He perished on the field of battle before he attained to the full flower of his powers ; but in the history of England his name "liveth for evermore."

Even in this land of great houses—even in Buckinghamshire—Hampden House has a note of its own. It faces you with the calm pride of a real old English home.

Such homes, when you visit them in this restless world of to-day, possess a secret almost lost to modern times. They whisper this secret to all who have ears to hear—the secret of withdrawal from the tumult to gain new strength ; strength, when called, to ride the whirlwind and direct the storm.

It was just such a service that this Mansion, Hampden House, performed for the Man, John Hampden. It was hither, to Hampden House, the home of his forefathers, that he withdrew through those fearful years of the early seventeenth century—the nine years (1628–1636) through which England, the Mother of Parliaments, was governed without a Parliament, by a King who had resolved to summon no more.

Then, in 1636, the storm broke. Charles, des-

perate for funds, levied "ship money"—a naval tax hitherto confined to the great ports—on this inland county of Buckinghamshire. He sought, in this tax, for the key to arbitrary power.

The King's Commissioners assessed the meadows by which one passes in approaching the house—those meadows just close to the road—at thirty shillings. John Hampden refused to pay. Here, sitting in this house, he quietly defied the King's Commissioners. In that refusal he lit the flames of England's resistance; he became the architect of England's freedom.

In 1640, when at last Parliament had to be called together—mainly because, owing to Hampden's resistance, ship-money had failed as a tax—John Hampden became Member of Parliament for Buckinghamshire, and, by Clarendon's own admission, "the most popular man in England." It was then that his career really began.

Macaulay, writing in 1831, tells us that Hampden's House was very much neglected. But that is certainly not true to-day. For it is faithfully guarded and tended by a collateral descendant of the great Hampden—the present Earl of Buckinghamshire, who has lived on the property for nearly forty years, ever since his accession in 1885. This tall, broad-shouldered Earl has devoted himself to the pious care of this historic mansion, this jewel of our freedom. He has collected in the house pictures and relics of his great ancestor's life. By removing some of the stucco from the old towers he has restored for us some image of what the house must have looked like in the days of "The Patriot" owner.

For, like most very old English country homes, Hampden House has gone through many changes. Some kind of a house stood there in the days of the Saxons—perhaps a castle, built on high ground

for protection from assault. Mediæval Hampdens added rooms, and in John Hampden's days the house was already a considerable structure. There is a tower on the western side, called after King John; and probably it really dates from the time of Magna Charta.

The present house is much larger than the dwelling that stood there in the days of John Hampden. Between 1740 and 1750, a century after Hampden's death, one of his successors, perhaps enriched by the wars, developed a passion for building. He suffered from an eighteenth-century keenness for the pseudo-romantic. He added the present two wings, covering the beautiful old brick—such as you still see at Chequers—with a blanket of stucco. He castellated the stucco from end to end of the wings.

The real interest of the house now lies in the centre. That part of the house dates from John Hampden, and in it are situated all the rooms in which he actually lived. You pass from the vestibule and passage into a very lofty hall, its walls covered with pictures and surrounded with a high wooden gallery. This hall is now roofed in with a handsome oak barn ceiling, taken by the present Earl from one of his own tithe-barns.

Over the fireplace hangs a beautiful and suggestive portrait of John Hampden—a portrait that becomes a very living thing viewed from across the hall. On the further wall hangs a full-length Italian portrait of Queen Elizabeth, presented to Griffith Hampden by the great lady herself as a memorial of her visit. That portrait has been often—too often—restored.

We come to the heart of this mansion.

For through a door to the right you pass into the real sanctuary—the little room, known as the "Brick Parlour," where John Hampden was sitting

when the King's officers came to arrest him for refusing to pay his ship-money.

We can picture John Hampden sitting in that little chamber of his country house, perhaps writing or smoking, waiting for the visit. We can see their entry—perhaps a little shyly, for he was a big man in the county—and we can picture him rising, with a smile on his face, to make an unresisting surrender.

For if we look at the two portraits—one hanging here in the Brick Parlour, and the other over the mantelpiece in the hall—we see, behind all their differences, the reality of a "gentle man." The statue in St. Stephen's Hall at Westminster—like the statue in the market-place at Aylesbury—gives you the impression of a soldier. But here you have the true civilian—the man who only took up the sword when compelled; the soldier who loved leisure and retirement; good-tempered and amenable; essentially a man of peace.

Yet if you look at the eyes, you catch a glimpse of the resolute will which defied Charles at the height of his power. You see in John Hampden just the typical Anglo-Saxon, so easy-going and yet so stiff; at once so cheerful and so grim; covering with his dangerous smile the dogged heart that beats within.

It was the same Hampden who stood between the warring factions on the floor of the House of Commons and prevented them from sheathing their swords in one another's bowels; who opposed civil war until he saw that Charles allowed him no other way; but who, in Clarendon's great phrase, "when he drew the sword, threw away the scabbard."

On the table of the Brick Parlour lies a family Bible which belonged to Philip Cromwell, an uncle of Oliver and a brother of Hampden's mother. For Hampden's father, as we all know, married Elizabeth Cromwell, the aunt of Oliver; so that Hamp-

den and Oliver Cromwell were first cousins. They were also—so Clarendon tells us—“bosom friends,” and that friendship played a great part in the history of the civil wars.

In one of his later speeches—long after Hampden's death—Oliver described a curious conversation with his cousin John. He told how, in that talk, he had first thrown out the idea of the “Model Army”—an army of men who should, by their habit of self-discipline and law of self-control, enable the yeomen of England to fight on an equality with the high-born Cavaliers of England. Godliness against Birth! It was the idea that won the civil wars.

It is worth while to recall the famous passage in that speech of Cromwell (April, 1657) when he fell into the vein of reminiscence and recalled this remarkable exchange between the cousins:

“I had a very worthy friend then; and he was a very noble person; and I know that his memory is very grateful to you all—Mr. John Hampden.

“‘Your troops,’ said I, ‘are most of them old decayed serving-men and tapsters, and suchlike fellows; and,’ said I, ‘their troops are gentlemen's sons, younger sons, and persons of quality: do you think that the spirits of such base and mean fellows will ever be able to encounter gentlemen, that have honour and courage and resolution in them?’

“Truly I did represent to him in this manner conscientiously, and truly I did tell him: ‘You must get men of a spirit, and take it not ill what I say—I know you will not—of a spirit that is likely to go on as far as gentlemen will go; or else you will be beaten still.’

“I told him so: I did truly.

“He was a wise and worthy person; and he did think that I talked a good notion, but an impracticable one.”

But Cromwell did it; and Hampden was wrong. It was not “impracticable.” Cromwell found in

England men who were capable of this great thing. He said :

" I raised such men as had the fear of God before them, as made some conscience of what they did ; and from that day forward, I must say to you, they were never beaten ; and wherever they were engaged against the enemy, they beat continually." ¹

This notable passage from a reported speech brings out most vividly the contrast between the two men—the one full of blazing initiative, a man of war and of God ; the other the reflective, restrained, cautious man of affairs.

Both temperaments were required to settle England. Cromwell could win the war ; but he lost the peace. Hampden might have won the peace.

Clarendon—Hyde—who knew both sides in this struggle, pointed out the vivid contrast of temperament between the serene, easy, well-governed nature of Hampden, in love with justice and freedom, but hating violence, and the passionate, brooding, volcanic energy of his cousin Oliver.

It was a calamity that, while the volcano survived, the " still small voice " of Hampden was silenced for ever on the field of Chalgrove.

There are other pathetic relics of " The Patriot "—as all men have agreed to call him—in the Brick Parlour of Hampden House.

There is the beautiful silver chalice, claiming by its inscription to be the very cup from which Hampden drank the sacramental wine when he took his dying communion as he lay in his agony in the Shepherd's Inn at the little town of Thame. There is the heraldic family helmet which was carried in front of his coffin at his funeral. There is the

¹ Thomas Carlyle's edition of *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, 4 vols. Vol. iii, pp. 205-6. London : Chapman & Hall.

record taken from the parish register, very simply stating the fact of his burial in Great Hampden Church :

"N.B. John Hampden Esq: Lord of Great Hampden, 1643."

Note those significant letters—N.B.—placed there by Lenthall, the Rector of Great Hampden, and the brother of the famous Speaker of the Long Parliament. It is eloquent of those dangerous times that the Rector dared to add nothing more; and it was probably the same atmosphere of fear which explains the strange absence of papers and records in Hampden House.

The Brick Parlour also contains the carefully preserved record of that strange and gruesome episode in Hampden's posthumous history—Lord Nugent's famous exhumation. Nugent, the writer of the *Memorials of Hampden*, the book which was the subject of Macaulay's essay, seems to have been thoroughly worried and puzzled by the Royalist tradition—dating from a remark of a son-in-law of Hampden—that "The Patriot" was killed by the explosion of his own over-loaded pistol, which—according to this story—shattered his hand. All contemporary witnesses—including Clarendon—agree in saying that Hampden was wounded, in the heart of the action, by two bullets in the shoulder. The Royalists evidently took up the other story in order to dim the glory of his death, though the difference seems of slight importance to-day.

But Lord Nugent determined to discover the truth. He had no clue as to where, in the church, John Hampden was buried. But he opened the grave of Hampden's wife, and took out a coffin inscribed with no name. He examined the body, discovered that a hand was missing, and that the shoulder, although dislocated, showed no trace

of a bullet-wound. The narrator gives a full and most grisly account of the condition of the body; and tradition says that the coffin was left open in the middle of the church until the parishioners complained to the Bishop and insisted that it should be re-interred.

Then comes the strange part of this gruesome history. For it seems that a doctor happened to examine the body, and discovered that it was a female buried along with her stillborn child! Whereupon Lord Nugent, who had published a full account of his investigations in the earlier editions of his book, took out the whole story, and the later edition of 1856 happily appears without any reference to this incident.

After this, may we not extend to John Hampden the gentle shield and protection of Shakespeare's epitaph:

" My Shakespeare's curse on clown and knave
Who will not let his ashes rest ! "

John Hampden, after all, died for his country's freedom, and he deserves to rest in peace—wherever he rests. For we do not know to this day.¹

We pass out of the house into the garden—smooth English lawns, with gay beds of summer flowers and a brilliant, many-hued peacock strutting about in the sunshine; a neatly trimmed, well-hedged garden of Central England, with its atmosphere of repose, far removed from the storms of the sea-coast. Then we cross the drive to the little church of Great Hampden, to scan the tombs of John Hampden's ancestors.

The earliest Hampdens lie beneath the floor of the old chancel. You remove the drugget and you see let into the stones their beautiful brasses, ex-

¹ Tradition says that he was buried at the east end of the church, close to the altar.

quisitely wrought outlines of those men and women of the Middle Ages as they lived and moved, in their armour and their cloaks. They stand out in relief against the rough granite now worn by the feet of many generations.

You can lean down and read the inscriptions, and you will find that in those days men prayed for one another's souls, and were even urged to do so. *ORA PRO ANIMIS*—"Pray for their souls."

Then as you move nearer the altar, and pass to the sixteenth century, the moment comes when that prayer ceases. The soul is no longer a thing to be prayed for.

The iron shutter of the Reformation has fallen between us and the next world.

Rise to your feet, replace the drugget, and look up at the walls of the church. They too are covered with the records of the Hampdens. On the south wall of the chancel is the touching memorial which Hampden drew up himself to that beloved first wife of his, Elizabeth Symeon, who bore him nine children and then faded away into the Great Silence a few years before the Civil War (1638). We can fancy we still hear her sweet voice now on the lawns of Hampden House amid the prattle of her little children. Then she loses the great gift of life and her husband is left alone. His great agony speaks from the memorial on the wall.¹

On the northern wall of the chancel are the memorials of the Hampdens who have carried on the line since the eighteenth century, including a genealogical tree showing how, in 1754, the direct

¹ "In her pilgrimage

The staie and comfort of her neighbours,
The love and glory of a well-ordered family,
The delight and happiness of tender parents—
But a crown of Blessings to a husband.
In a wife to all an eternal pattern of goodness
And source of love which she was."

Hampden line was broken and the estates passed to the Trevors,¹ whence they have since passed to the Hobarts, of whom the living representative is the present Earl.

Walk down the nave to the west end of the church, and you will find that whatever may have happened to the name, the Hampden spirit still survives. Above, on the walls, are the proud Hampden hatchments, with the defiant motto, *VESTIGIA NULLA RETRORSUM*—"NOT A STEP BACKWARDS." This device was emblazoned on the Hampden banner carried in front of Hampden's regiment at Edge Hill and many another stricken field, and it is still the motto of the Hampden family to-day.

"Not a step backwards." There speaks what is best in the English spirit, and, as if to show that it is not an idle boast of the Hampdens, there, on the walls of the nave and northern aisle, are the tablets of those two Hampdens who fell in the Great War—one a cousin of the present Earl, and another a Private Hampden who, following in the footsteps of his famous ancestor, just gave all he possessed, even his own life, for his country. It was in a very fine spirit, I think, that the present Earl allowed a record of this youth to be placed on the walls of Great Hampden Church, although, as he told me, he knew nothing of him except that he bore the name of Hampden.

¹ JOHN HAMPDEN

XXIII hereditary Lord of Great Hampden
 A Burgess for Wendover in three Parliaments
 Died unmarried Feby 4th MDCCLIV aged 58:
 Having bequeathed his estates and name
 To his kinsman the Honble Robt Trevor (now Hampden)
 Son of the Right Honble Thos Lord Trevor,
 Son of the Right Honble Sir John Trevor,
 By RUTH daughter of JOHN HAMPDEN
 Slain on Chalgrave Field.
 MDCXIII.

So surely does nobility still oblige ; true nobility of simple memory and tradition—so clearly does the clarion call of self-sacrifice resound across the centuries !

Was there one moment of hesitation in that bitter conflict when John Hampden—and Cromwell too—meditated a flight across the Atlantic to a newer and a brighter world ? The story is told by Macaulay with great conviction of detail :

“ The cousins took their passage in a vessel which lay in the Thames, and which was bound for North America. They were actually on board, when an Order of Council appeared, by which the ship was prohibited from sailing. Seven other ships, filled with emigrants, were stopped at the same time.”

Macaulay adds that Hampden was going to join the Puritan colony in Connecticut, the little settlement of Saybrook, at the mouth of the Connecticut river, under the foundership of Lord Saye and Lord Brooke. Modern history doubts the story. But whether it be true or not, it is the fact that all these English Puritans fought with one eye on the New World. There lay their possible security ; there lay the vast reservoir of freedom from which they ever drew a new strength.

Hampden's life-story draws to its sombre, heroic close. In June, 1643, Lord Essex, fatally hesitating between peace and war, had scattered his Commonwealth soldiers in “ little pockets ” between the Chilterns and Oxford, then the King's head-quarters. Prince Rupert, the one brilliant soldier in the service of the King, was at Oxford. He saw the danger of being encircled, and gathering together a force of his daring horsemen, he made a desperate foray across the Thames, surprising and menacing small outposts of the Parliament at Postcombe and Chinnor.

John Hampden, long dissatisfied with the policy of the Parliament generals, was sleeping that night at Watlington. Roused from sleep by the cry of alarm that ran across the country-side—"Rupert is coming!"—he threw on his clothes and without a second thought joined the ranks of the first little party of volunteers who had collected to face the raiders. The small force thus gathered threw itself across the line of Rupert's retreat at a little place since known as Chalgrove Field, three miles west of the river Thames. There they stood, in the forlorn hope of cutting off Prince Rupert from Oxford.

Rupert was not so easily to be stayed. Knowing that his existence was at stake, he crashed fiercely against the little band of Puritans, the first to leap the hedge that divided him from the foe. The Roundheads fought with fury, and it was for a time one of the toughest of the smaller fights of the war. But the odds were all against the Puritans. Rupert broke through, and, spurring all that June day, successfully reached Oxford.

Early in the fight John Hampden was seen riding from the field with his head hanging down and his hand resting on his horse's neck. It was not thus that John Hampden was wont to leave the battle, and all who saw him knew that he was mortally stricken. The horse and the helpless rider, speeding from that field of blood, passed in their fearful journey of death the very mansion, Pyrton House, from which, in his happy youth, John Hampden had taken the bride of his heart. The two, man and beast, journeyed on to the little town of Thame, that clean and smiling Oxfordshire town, and there they halted. The townsmen gathered round, and tenderly bore the stricken Hampden into the Shepherd's Inn.

There he lay in bitter anguish of body and soul

for several days. In his death-agony he bethought him only of his beloved soldiers; he wrote letter after letter to London, imploring the Parliamentary leaders to protect and safeguard his troops.

As he wrote, Hampden's strength ebbed. Sir Philip Warwick, the Royalist, tells us in his memoirs that Charles, touched by Hampden's fate, sent from Oxford an offer to send a surgeon. But Hampden was past human aid. He took the Sacrament from Lenthall, the Vicar of Great Hampden, drinking the sacred wine from that chalice now in the Brick Parlour. He murmured a few broken snatches of prayer. Then he turned on his side and achieved a soldier's release on June 24th.

A few days later John Hampden's body was taken from Thame, a ten-mile journey past Princes Risborough, to be buried in the church of his ancestors at Great Hampden. He was carried across the fields, silver and golden with the buttercups and daisies of that English June, to the little church so near to the mansion he so deeply loved. His coffin journeyed shoulder-high, borne by the men of his own regiment; and there followed a long column of those faithful "Green Coats," heroes of so many fights, sorrowing for the loss of their leader.

The Puritan soldiers moved slowly across the fields, with arms reversed and muffled drums; and from their lips there came the strains of that noblest and most haunting of chants—the Ninetieth Psalm:

"For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.
Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep . . ."

So Hampden came back to his beloved countryside, where he had spent the happiest hours of

his life. So he was brought in all simple honour to his own dear home.

"Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home hast gone, and ta'en thy wages."

After that death there fell, just for a moment, a great hush on the English nation. Just for one flashing moment Englishmen realized the tragic waste and cruel hate of civil strife.

Then the war began once more.

Yet John Hampden did not die in vain. Standing there to-day in Great Hampden Church, in the calm of Central England, on the summit of the Chilterns, in the tranquil, guarded peace of that beautiful English home, we realize how great was Hampden's choice and how tremendous his decision.

He paid the price of his life—for our liberties. He counted all this beauty of domestic peace—all this charm of our English country-side—as dross in the balance. He threw into the scale of battle a great jewel for us.

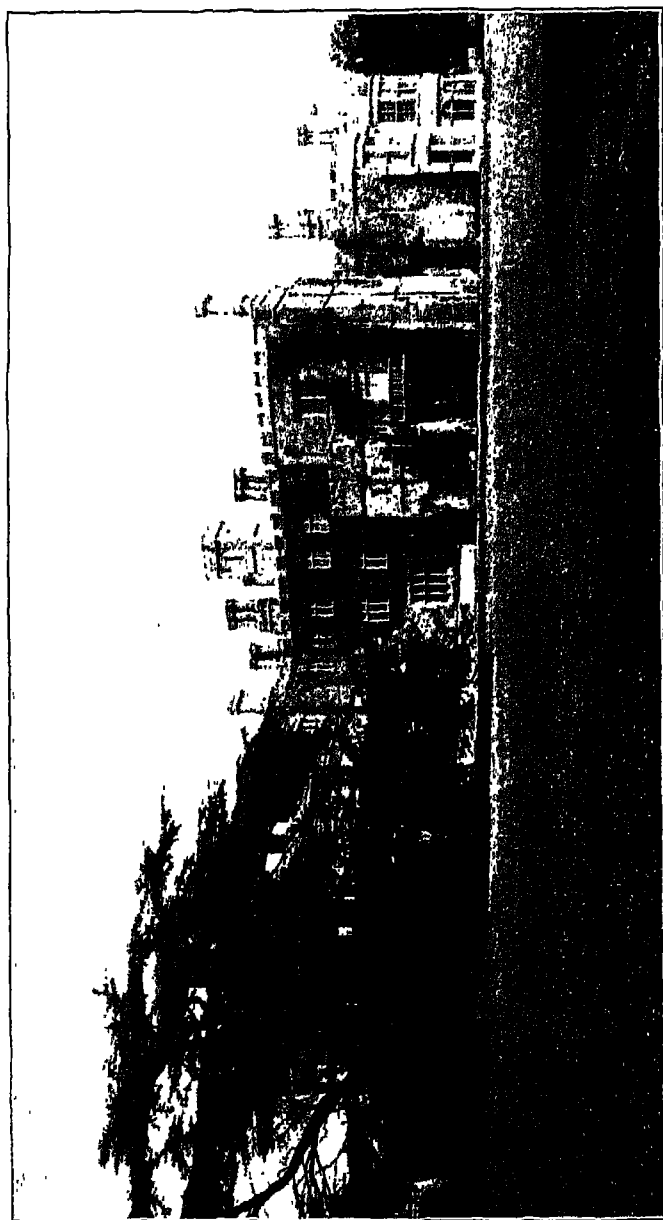
He set to all Englishmen an enduring example.

It was the example of a man who set liberty higher than happiness, and who preferred death on the battlefield to a life of slavery.

VIII

The Cromwells and Hinchbrooke

"A stately pleasant house, among its shady lawns and expanses, on the left bank of the Ouse river, a short half-mile west of Huntingdon: still stands pretty much as Oliver Cromwell's grandfather left it."—*Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*: THOMAS CARLYLE.



H. Coates.

HINCHINBROOKE : The West View.

VIII

The Cromwells and Hinchingsbrooke

ABOUT a mile north of the little town of Huntingdon, just off the great road sweeping northwards into Northamptonshire, stands the famous house of Hinchingsbrooke. It is just visible from the road, set back a little beyond the terraced gardens, and framed between its great cedar tree and its acacia.

Preserved in all its beauty by the pious care of its present owner, Hinchingsbrooke is still to-day one of the loveliest houses in east Central England : exquisite in its setting of rich, fertile country ; noble in its architecture ; steeped in an atmosphere of stately, austere memory.

Hinchingsbrooke, indeed, has many memories. But above all others one will always tower. It is that this great and beautiful house was for several generations the home of the Cromwell family.

Within those walls, so little altered, lived Cromwell's ancestors. On that lawn, in childhood, Oliver himself played. More and more as time goes on, that association becomes the absorbing memory and tradition of Hinchingsbrooke.

You pass down a drive-way, through a quaint archway of triumph encrusted with heraldic Tudor carvings. You are face to face with the picture of an exquisite English home : the broad, handsome, friendly frontage ; the ample lawn ; the welcoming portico ; the great mullioned windows ; the high

gables of the roof, topped with their lofty Tudor chimneys; the castellated tower, bannered with England's flag; the little, old buildings on the right;—here you have England at its best—England serene, unravaged, secure, passing on from generation to generation the treasures of her storied past.

Hinchingbrooke seems to stand for our long, unbroken, English peace.

Yet, like so many of our great English houses, its history is based on plunder. Before the Dissolution of the Monasteries, this site was occupied by a famous nunnery, of which the buildings still survive in use as lodgings for the servants or as stables.

Thomas Cromwell, the "hammer of the monasteries," gave that nunnery to a relation, one of those many kinsmen who shared the loot of the monasteries and nunneries. The relation held the name of Williams; but as Williams married a niece of the great Thomas, it was easy to change it to Cromwell. That Cromwell paid £17 10s. for the nunnery, and proceeded to build Hinchingbrooke.

A Cromwell to a Cromwell succeeded through the sixteenth century, until the climax was reached with Sir Henry Cromwell, the "Golden Knight."

It was the "Golden Knight," more freehanded than the "Golden Dustman," who introduced into the Cromwell family the fatal habit of entertaining monarchs. First, Elizabeth was a guest at Hinchingbrooke; then James I—on his march from Scotland to London to pick up the sceptre that had fallen from the lifeless, heirless, fingers of Elizabeth.

Sir Henry died, and his son, Sir Oliver Cromwell, succeeded. But Sir Oliver inherited that same fatal habit. James I came again—and again. James was a thrifty monarch himself; but perhaps, for that very reason, he fed gladly from a willing hand. The fortunes of Hinchingbrooke ebbed away, and

at last, in 1628, the Cromwells had to sell the house to the Montagus, who inhabit it to-day.

Sir Oliver Cromwell of Hinchingbrooke had a younger brother, Robert, who took a house in the little town of Huntingdon. There he lived and cultivated a smaller estate than the eldest. Robert Cromwell was just a small landlord.

Robert became the father of many children, and among them was one Oliver, afterwards Lord Protector of the English Commonwealth. Oliver's father was not a butcher, as the Royalists falsely said; nor a brewer; nor anything else mechanical. He was just a small English county squire and farmer, who brewed and killed for himself.

"I was by birth a gentleman," said Oliver proudly in one of his speeches; and he was perfectly justified in his claim.

He was not only a gentleman, but also the nephew of one Knight and the grand-nephew of another. The man who cut off a king's head was, strangely enough, a very near relation to one who ruined himself by entertaining kings.

The whole neighbourhood is to-day still drenched with memories of Cromwell. His name still survives. Only a few years ago an Oliver Cromwell died near Huntingdon, an old farmer, full of years and honours.

Hinchingbrooke, too, is steeped in Cromwell memories. The present Lord Sandwich, the descendant of the Montagus, the seventh Earl, fosters that splendid tradition. He bows to the Cromwell name.

The Cromwell portraits look down sternly from the staircase walls: the young Oliver in his armour, lean and soldierly; the old Oliver in his lace collar, broad-browed, great-hearted; Oliver's mother and father; Oliver's right-hand man, Ireton;—they seem to frown, with their rugged simplicity, on all

those gay and sumptuous butterflies of the Restoration, in their splendid silks and satins, who fill the other walls of the house.

Oliver Cromwell, after all, must have often moved through these rooms. His seems the fitting presence for that long, solemn study lined with the old, solid, brown-backed tomes; for the portico hall, with its cold stone walls and lofty roof. His Ironsides seem to tramp along those corridors.

There is a remarkable letter of that "taster" of houses, Horace Walpole, written in 1763, describing a visit to the Hinchbrooke of that day. Much of what he says applies to the present house, in spite of the constant reconstructions that have gone on since.

"Old, spacious, irregular," are the adjectives that he applies to the mansion; but he adds, "yet, not vast or forlorn."

Horace found the garden "wondrous small," and the park "almost smaller." But since his day the park has been enlarged, and it is now the gracious centre of much of the town's festivities.

The garden is still dainty and delicate. We must remember that Horace Walpole, spending that gorgeous existence of his in one long "wander life" from one stately country house to another, was rather exacting in these matters. He was accustomed to very spacious living.

"The whole," says Horace, by way of summing up his impressions of Hinchbrooke, "has a quiet decency adapted to Cromwell before his exaltation."

The "quiet decency" is true. For Hinchbrooke could never be magnificent. It is not a palace in the sense of Blenheim. It is essentially a home. That is what has drawn to this mansion so many great spirits—Carlyle, Frederic Harrison, and, above all, that great American, Mr. Walter

Page, who, during the Great War, so often found rest and comfort within these walls.

No wonder! For the place seems haunted with the noblest English memories. You sit at a window and you see Elizabeth, who visited Hinchingbrooke in the days of the "Golden Knight," advancing across the lawn, beruffled and bepainted. How her jewels flash in the sun! "Bless you, my people!" you hear her say, bowing right and left to the throng; and you catch the secret of her power.

Then the scene changes, and you hear the music of children's laughter. Two little boys are playing on the lawn. One is fragile and delicate; the other is sturdy and rough. They are rollicking in their play; then there is a sudden cry, and one of the lads—the delicate one—comes running across the lawn, crying and holding his hand to his head—"He is so rough! He hit me!"

So he cries, while the other lad stands staring, his face red with anger. "He tried to cheat me!" he shouts out, and the lawn and the old house reverberate with the sound of his voice. Perhaps both were to blame—both the rough boy, Oliver, and the delicate boy, Charles.

Ten years have passed. The air is full of laughter and music; and you see the lawn and terrace filled with gaudy figures, satined and besilked, laced and befurbelowed. The Commonwealth has come and gone. Once more the air is filled with the music of the flute and the rattle of the dice. The great gentlemen, more gorgeous than the ladies, bow low to the new Lord Sandwich—the Montagu that was, now the great Admiral of the Restoration, and still the owner of Hinchingbrooke. From within the house you hear the pulsing rhythm of the dance.

England is herself again.

But now we must leave Hinchbrooke, and visit the town of Huntingdon, where Oliver himself really lived. For, after all, though they hanged him in chains, he is still high above all those men. "It is strange," writes Pepys, less than ten years after his death (1667), "how everybody do nowadays reflect upon Oliver, and commend him, what brave things he did!"

Still more do we; and so it is of interest to visit even the site of the house where Oliver was born and bred. It lies in the High Street, in the centre of the town. Here Oliver lived till he went to Cambridge (1616)—and hither he returned, on the death of his father, at the age of eighteen (1617). He brought home his wife at the age of twenty-one (1620); and here he lived with his mother, his sisters, his wife, and his growing family for ten years, till he sold out and went to St. Ives (1631). Here, then, Oliver resided for thirty years, and all his children were born here except his youngest.

A sturdy, modern mansion now occupies the site, which is marked by a fitting inscription. The Mayor of Huntingdon now lives in the house. I wandered, by his courtesy, through the spacious gardens where Oliver played and meditated; through all the rooms of the large house, which was probably modelled on the Cromwell mansion. They had large houses in those days, and many rooms: and Oliver wanted them all for his large and growing family. Twenty Cromwells at one time must have been living in that house: Oliver, his wife, his children, his mother, and his sisters. They were not afraid to live in those days!

Huntingdon is now a quiet country town of some 6,000 inhabitants. It was probably larger in the days of Oliver. In pre-Reformation times it possessed sixteen churches. The church where Oliver worshipped has been destroyed. Huntingdon has

decayed along with the decline of the rural life of Central England. At the time of the civil wars it was a sturdy township, and its adhesion to the cause of Parliament was a vital matter for Cromwell and his friends. Many a stout fighter came from that little town.

At the time of Oliver's birth, Huntingdon, like so many English towns at that day, was being swept by a great religious revival. It was the second wave after the Reformation. First, from Italy, came the Renaissance. Secondly, from Northern Europe, came Protestantism. It was the second wave that caught Oliver and drove him forward. He was the son of his time. He was moulded by it as well as moulding.

His youth came before the time of the great religious division, and Oliver attended the Church of England services as regularly as the son of any other country gentleman. There is no proof that, as a boy, he varied from his kind. But the first real inspiration of Oliver's life came to him through his schoolmaster, Dr. Beard, the master of that little Huntingdon grammar-school which filled the little Norman building still standing in the centre of the town, and at present used by the modern school as a class-room. Oliver always continued the champion of Dr. Beard, and made his first speech in Parliament on his behalf. Cromwell always shielded his old schoolmaster—especially when he was being chased and persecuted by Laud and his friends for his independent preaching.

From Dr. Beard Oliver drew most of the knowledge that he possessed; for it is not clear that he gained much at Cambridge. After all, Dr. Beard did not do so badly for Oliver. It is not for moderns, who can rarely speak in any language but their own, to criticize too roughly a man who could converse in Latin with the diplomats of Europe!

But perhaps the most interesting reminders of Oliver are contained, not in the school, but in the parish church at Huntingdon; and there, some time ago, I was enabled to spend a very interesting hour over the records.

This parish church now possesses the registers of St. John's Church, where Oliver worshipped. The registers were probably transferred on the destruction of St. John's.

They are a scribbled palimpsest of one of the strangest episodes in English history. First, Oliver's birth is recorded in a Latin entry made at the time by the Rector:

Anno Dom 1599.

Oliverius Filius Roberti Cromwell gentilis (?) et Elizabethae: 25th April Ann: natus vigintesimo quinto die Aprilis et 29th Baptisatus Vigesimo novo ejusdem mensis.

(Translation.)

In the year of Our Lord 1599. Oliver the son of Robert Cromwell gentleman and his wife Elizabeth. Born on the 25th day of April. Baptized on the 29th of the same month.

But the really interesting thing about this entry is that below the first line are scribbled in another handwriting the following words:

"England's scourge for eleven years."

The words have been written angrily, and are scratched out angrily. The strife of the Civil War seems to be passing like a breath of fire across that register.

There are two even more remarkable entries. Under the date 1621, in the space between the entries of births and deaths in the register, stands the following entry, thumb-marked, partly deleted

and rubbed out, and cut right across in the middle with a knife:

Oliver Cromwell filius Roberti Cromwelli . . . (donavit penitentias ?) coram toto collegio pro factis.

(Translation.)

In the year 1621 Oliver Cromwell the son of Robert Cromwell . . . (did penance ?) in the presence of the whole congregation for his deeds.

The entry is very difficult to decipher, and the two words written in brackets have disappeared. But in 1628 there is another entry, which seems to indicate what those words were:

Anno Domini 1628. Hoc Anno Oliver Cromwell donavit penitentias coram tota collegio.

(Translation.)

In the year of Our Lord 1628. In this year Oliver Cromwell did penance in the presence of the whole congregation.

This is written in the same hand as the first entry, and is signed with a forgery of the Rector's initials—"J. T." (John Thomlinson).

These entries have played a strange and sinister part in history. On this fragile basis the Royalist historians built a whole superstructure of accusation and calumny against Oliver. They accused him of having twice confessed in open church to an evil life. They filled their books with varying stories of youthful debauchery, all leading back to these strange entries.

It is really important to place on record, therefore, that the most cursory inspection reveals both entries to be forgeries. The choice of years is certainly audacious. The first entry is under the date 1621, when Oliver was twenty-two years of age, already married for one year, and at the head of his house-

hold after the death of his father. It does not seem likely that, at that age, he would have "done penance" in the presence of the whole congregation. He had not started his political career, and therefore the inscription is both post-dated and ante-dated.

The next inscription is dated 1628—the very year in which Cromwell was returned for Parliament as the Member for Huntingdon. This is not a convincing story—this of a successful Member of Parliament "doing penance" for his misdeeds in the presence of the congregation. It seems scarcely characteristic of the spirit of Parliaments—as we know them!

The real interest of this battle of the pens within the church register at Huntingdon is that it vividly brings home to us how fiery and ardent were the passions that surged and swirled round the name and memory of Oliver Cromwell.

The glimpse at the few surviving stones and walls of the house at Huntingdon brings home to us one dominating and very English feature of Oliver Cromwell's character—his devotion to his family.

That devotion was freely given and freely returned. From first to last, whether in the tranquil days of peace or in the storms of war, Oliver never forgot or neglected any of his large and varied clan.

He lost his two eldest sons—one at Cambridge and one in the war. He always cherished their memory. There is that famous cry of his stricken heart: "Ah! It cut me to the heart; indeed, it did!" Those losses broadened and deepened his human sympathies.

It was the death of a favourite daughter—Elizabeth Claypole—that drew him down into the grave. At a moment of burning public care and anxiety, he nursed his sick daughter by day and by night. She died. He left her death-room a stricken man.

A few days later Quaker Fox met him riding at

the head of his Life Guards. "A waft of death came out from him." Within the week, amid the fury of nature, and the grief of man, his mighty spirit passed.

Mr. John Drinkwater ends that remarkable play of his, *Oliver Cromwell*, with the death of Oliver's mother at Whitehall. He has not overpainted the beauty of the relationship. The mutual affection of mother and son endured to the last—from the day on which he returned from Cambridge to tend her in the little house at Huntingdon, right up to the night when, at Whitehall amid the pomp and glory of her son's great position as Protector, she died at the great age of ninety-four. She was his great "piece of luck"—his best friend and wisest counsellor—never intoxicated by success, never cast down by failure—a simple Englishwoman from the Eastern Counties who played a great part.

"Happy he with such a mother!"

Yet with all his affection, Oliver was always stern with his family, and especially with his children. He set that type of the Puritan patriarch which became the model of English fatherhood for two centuries. There is no note of weakness in the strong, grave, loving admonitions which run through all the letters from the battlefield and the council chamber to his wife and children. He yearned for their souls. He detested levity and scorned worldliness—either in man or woman. He never stooped to family favouritism. He left both wife and children poor.

Richard Cromwell, that miserable son who brought the whole system to its downfall, was always in debt throughout the days of the life that he dragged out across the seas.

But they all loved Oliver to the end. He married his daughters to some of the best English blood. One became Lady Fauconbridge, another Lady

Claypole, another Mrs. Fleetwood, and another Lady Russell. It is a strange fact to-day that Cromwell's blood and tradition is still carried on—as it was at Chequers¹—into some of our highest families through the marriages of Cromwell's daughters. It was his daughters that inherited all his character and will-power—those daughters of Cromwell who, in so many houses of England, cherished the memory of their father through the dark days of the Restoration, and have handed it down to not a few homes to-day.

All those daughters, except one, were born in this little house in the centre of the little town of Huntingdon.

* * * * *

Oliver Cromwell passed from Huntingdon to play a great and commanding part in the life of his nation. He decided the issues of two great civil wars. He cut off the head of a king. He destroyed three Parliaments. He became in everything but actual name the King of England.

Starting from that little church in Huntingdon, he gathered round him the deep, serious thought and life of England, and for a time he raised our national existence to great altitudes of austere living and high courage.

Then he died at the very height of his power (1658), and suddenly and swiftly all that great fabric melted with him. His memory became a thing of insult; his body became outcast. The whole of that vast structure of Puritan England vanished in a night.

Why was this? Was it because of that sad mischance by which Cromwell lost his two elder sons? Because he had to fall back upon that third and unworthy son, Richard, to succeed him? Or was

¹ See "Oliver and Chequers," pp. 249.

his fault that he relied too much on his army, and too little on Parliament?

The true, abiding reason probably lies deeper.

In building up England solely as a Puritan state, Oliver Cromwell ignored this vital fact—that there is always another England—the England of good cheer; the England that rejoices in sunshine and beauty; the England of boisterous, jovial living; the England of Shakespeare's comedies and Dickens's novels.

That England is represented, on its better side, in a house like Hinchbrooke. There you have a touch of the spirit of beauty and elegance from which England cannot ever for long be divorced.

Cromwell—through his magistrates and his major-generals—quarrelled with that England; and the end of that quarrel was that Cromwell, even before his death, was a beaten man. That was what beat him.

For England will not, either yesterday or to-day, for long tolerate that rule. She admires the Puritans, and respects them. But she will not for long be governed by them.

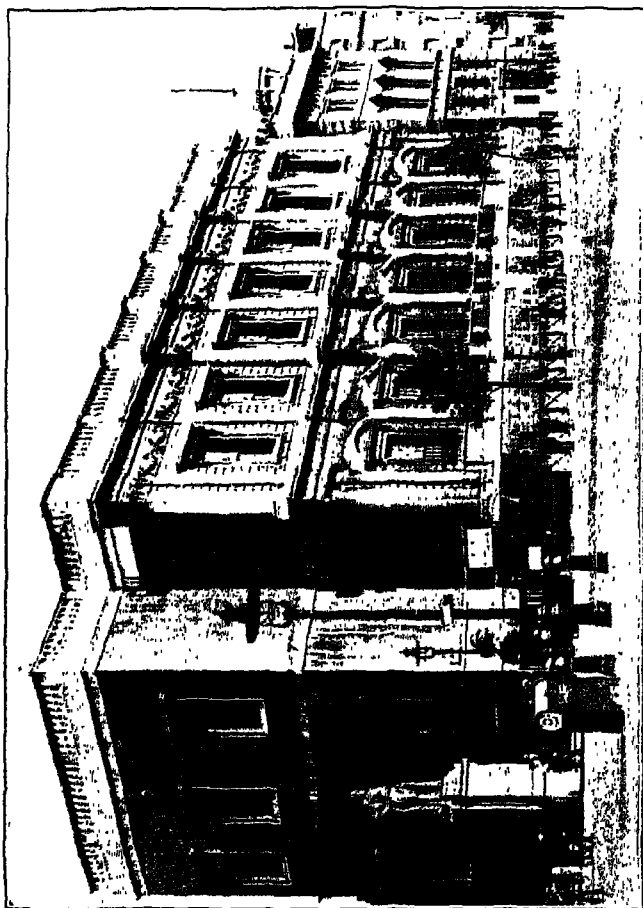
IX

Charles and the Banqueting House

" Vanquished in life, his death
By beauty made amends ;
The passing of his breath
Won his defeated ends.

" Brief life and hapless ? Nay ;
Through death, life grew sublime,
Speak after sentence ? Yea,
And to the end of time."

*By the Statue of King Charles at
Charing Cross : LIONEL JOHNSON.*



London Electricity Agency.

THE BANQUETING HOUSE, WHITEHALL.

IX

Charles and the Banqueting House

IN the very centre of Whitehall, opposite the Horse Guards, there stands to-day a building which in beauty and majesty still marks it out from among all the later houses that crowd it in.

It is the Banqueting House of the old palace of Whitehall, that palace which at one time gloriously stretched, in pomp and power, almost as far as Westminster Hall. The Banqueting House survives to-day when all else of that palace—its chapels and its fairy “lodgings”—have long since perished by fire.

This house was the last addition to the palace. For it was built by James I for his son Charles. The architect was that great genius of the English Renaissance, Inigo Jones. When Charles came to his own, he decorated the great banqueting chamber with the vast ceiling pictures of Paul Rubens which still to-day flash down, in splendid colour, on the stored relics of military glory with which the floor is now crowded.

Charles was the Man of this Mansion.

There he banqueted.

There he perished.

Pause for a moment amid the whirling traffic of Whitehall—and look long and carefully at that exquisite Renaissance structure.

There are two storeys, both of massive strength. Each storey is lit to-day on the western face with

seven large, handsome, paned windows. Between the windows each is artificially supported by eight Greek columns, Ionic on the lower story and Corinthian on the higher, with floral decorations carved between the columns in the upper story. The flat roof of the building is surrounded by a low stone balustrade. At one corner of that balustrade stands the weathercock erected by the second James when he was nervous of the coming of William of Orange, and wished to observe the direction of the wind.

Enter the building; imagine that the hall is empty, and look at it as it was three centuries ago, when it was still brilliant with the "pomp and circumstance" of a Court, and had not entered into its later phases of Royal Chapel or Museum.

Look up, and you will gradually realize the proportions of a hall second in England only to that noble and immense structure which was designed and erected by our Norman conquerors. The great chamber is less than half the size of Westminster Hall,¹ but it is so finely proportioned that it seems almost as big. The walls are sustained by a series of Ionic columns which have been toned in brown and 'gold by modern restorers, but which probably flashed with royal scarlet in the days of the Stuarts. Near the roof, all round the hall, there runs a railed gallery whence the spectators looked down on to the banqueters beneath, or watched the King and his courtiers saunter and swagger. For Courts lived very much in public in those days.

Over the northern door there is a minstrels' gallery, above which, in later days, sounded the organ for the royal services of the Georges.

Charles loved this building and all its surroundings—the Holbein Gate, which stood close to where Gwydyr House is now; the Privy Gardens, the

¹ Westminster Hall is 238 feet long. The Banqueting Hall is 110 feet.

Tennis Court, and the Cockpit—the buildings of that beautiful old Elizabethan England which spread in splendid disarray along the banks of the silvery river.

Charles still dominates the building to-day. As we gaze at its lovely proportions, it is always Charles that comes back to us—that handsome, feckless figure, with the flowing hair and the pointed beard—the long, narrow face—the dreamy, haughty countenance.

So winning in speech—so faithless in deed—so attractive in personality, so deceptive in reality—the worst of the Stuarts and yet the best; the standing puzzle and perplexity of history; the patron of the arts, the good husband and the pious father—and yet, to so many of his own age, just “the man of blood.”

Yet “the man of blood” died well. The Puritans could not deny that.

Even Andrew Marvell, the paid laureate of the Commonwealth, was compelled by that dread law of truth which is the prophetic soul of poetry, to bless where he was expected to curse; and, himself a witness of the scene, to hymn long after, in the very midst of an official tribute to Cromwell, the wonder and miracle of the “Tyrant’s” death-scene. We all know his famous tribute:

“He nothing common did or mean
Upon that memorable scene
But with a keener eye
The axe’s edge did try;

“Nor called the gods with vulgar spite,
To vindicate his helpless right;
But bowed his comely head
Down, as upon a bed.”¹

* * * * *

¹ This passage occurs in the middle of Marvell’s *Horatian Ode upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland*, published in 1776, nearly a hundred years after Marvell’s death.

Why did Charles die so well? The last scene of his trial in Westminster Hall had been marked by an unseemly struggle between him and the soldiers—a terrible and tragic outburst against the reality of death. He had called on the gods.

How account for the change? To understand it, we must table the evidence of his faithful secretary, Sir Thomas Herbert, who, some time after his master's death, published to the world a full and poignant account of the last days.¹

Let us see what happened between the leaving of Westminster Hall and the arrival at the scaffold.

Charles was marched from Westminster across Whitehall to St. James's Palace. There he was provided with one single, little, narrow chamber where he was to stay under the strictest guard till the scaffold was ready.

Instantly a great change came over the condemned King. He had finished with the world. The rage of that last struggle passed away. He became as quiet as a "cushat dove." He utterly blotted out, in one brief hour, all the hopes and fears—the tempestuous angers—of the past month. He gave the strictest orders to Sir Thomas Herbert. Nobody was to be admitted to his room except the beloved priest, Juxon, then Bishop of London,² a saintly old man, always Charles's favourite spiritual counsellor: perhaps all the dearer to him for having been forcibly taken from his side some time before.

So the door of Charles's prison room was "shut with a clang" on the pomps of this world. Princes and nobles came to comfort him. They were all given the same answer. "My time is short and precious," said Charles to Herbert. "The best office they can do now is to pray for me."

¹ *Memoirs of the Last Two Years of the Reign of Charles I* (1702).

² Afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury.

The nobles were followed, curiously enough, by many London Puritan Ministers, all desiring to pray for and with him. Charles might, perhaps, be excused for an absence of enthusiasm. They had prayed so often against him—those Ministers—as he remarked at another time, that he could scarcely expect them to pray well for him. But even to them he showed now utter gentleness. He thanked them kindly, and hoped to be remembered in their, as in all other good subjects', prayers. But for his own personal comfort he had already chosen Bishop Juxon, and "he would have no other."

There was only one exception to this rule of exclusion. Late one evening a messenger came from The Hague with a letter from the King's eldest son—the Prince of Wales, afterwards Charles II—then in exile. The messenger was a Mr. Seymour, who had known Charles I in his days of state. He was so affected by the contrast of the King's present position, confined in a small room, surrounded with stern soldiers and condemned to certain death, that he fell on his knees and clasped Charles about the legs, "lamentably mourning." The scene was so touching that it affected the stern but just Hacker, the Ironside soldier who had been placed on guard over Charles. But the King seems to have discouraged the emotion. He read the letter, gave his reply, and then quickly retired to his devotions with the Bishop. Charles required all his strength for what was to come.

His devotions over, the King came back to Herbert, and gave him a commission which reads, even in the uncouth writing of the faithful cavalier, like a romantic page from Dumas.

The King took from his finger a ring with an emerald in it set between two diamonds, and commanded Herbert to take it to "a lady living then in Channel Row, behind King Street in Westminster,

and to give it her, without saying anything!"

Herbert set forth. The night was very dark and cold. In those days Westminster was little better lighted than a remote country village is now. But it was not only cold and darkness that Herbert had to face on his mysterious errand. London was practically under martial law. At every few paces stood a guard of grim soldiers in no mood for laxity. The generals had a deed on foot which was not yet accomplished, and might yet be prevented. London was full of the King's sympathizers, and the air hummed with rumours of plots for the King's escape. No one was allowed to move near Westminster that night who did not know the password.

Happily for Herbert, he had a kind friend in the officer who guarded the King in Westminster Hall—Colonel Thomlinson—he was now in charge at St. James's Palace—a courteous gentleman who won the King's regard.¹ Thomlinson gave Herbert the password of the night.

Armed with that precious key, Herbert moved slowly through the dark streets.

Every sentinel bade him stand, and none would let him pass until the corporal had come up and received the word from him. Cromwell's soldiers were not to be trifled with that night.

Arrived at the house of the lady—a certain Lady Wheeler, a Lady of the Royal Household—Herbert delivered the ring.

"Sir," said she, "give me leave to show you the way into the parlour."

There she left him, and returned shortly after, carrying a little cabinet closed with three seals, two of them being the King's arms, and the third the figure of a Roman.

The box contained the King's jewels—or all that

¹ As proof of it, the King gave him one day his gold tooth-pick-case as he was walking in the Presence Chamber!

were left of them. Early next morning, in Herbert's presence, Charles opened them—a heap of poor, broken Georges and Garters. "You see," said he, "all the wealth now in my power to give to my children." Charles had sent for the jewels from their secret hiding-place in order to have them ready for dividing between his children when they came to say farewell.

All the world knows of the interview between Charles and his two youngest children, the Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Gloucester.¹ The story of it, told by the Princess Elizabeth herself, and published in the *Eikon Basilike* in March, 1649, has, in the minds of most women and many men, blotted out the whole multitude of Charles's offences. Macaulay realized the peril of its appeal to the heart, and in a famous passage tried to abate the power of its pathos. Perhaps it is not too fanciful to imagine that it was this simple record, told in the childish language of a young girl of tender years, that paved the way to the Restoration.

When the children came in, the girl was sobbing pitifully, and the little boy, as yet too young for the realities of grief, was weeping to see his sister weep. The King took one on either knee, kissed them, gave them his blessing, and began to speak very seriously to the girl. He wished to say something to her which he feared to commit to writing.

"But, sweetheart," he ended, "thou wilt forget what I tell thee."

Amid her sobs, the little girl promised faithfully to write down all he told her. Then he begged her, in his own favourite phrases, not to grieve or torment herself for him, "for it was a glorious death he should die—for the laws and religion of the land." He had forgiven all his enemies, and hoped that God would forgive them also. He doubted not that God

¹ Died in 1660 at the age of 21. Thus he was ten years of age at the time of this interview.

would restore the throne to his son, and that they would all be happier—Charles had so often this strange sense of his evil star—than they could possibly have been if he had lived.

Then he turned to his youngest boy and spoke to him with the true simplicity of a real child-lover.

"Sweetheart," he said, "now they will cut off thy father's head."

The child, says his sister, looked at his father "very earnestly and stedfastly" when he heard these strange and puzzling words.

"Now they will cut off thy father's head," he went on. "Mark, child, what I say; they will cut off my head and perhaps make thee a king. But mark what I say; you must not be a king so long as your brothers Charles and James do live, for they will cut off your brothers' heads when they will catch them, and cut off thy head too at the last, and therefore I charge you, do not be made king by them."

Whereat the boy said, "I will sooner be torn in pieces first"—filling his father's eyes with tears of admiration and pleasure.

The jewels were divided—all but one famous George cut in onyx and surrounded with diamonds, which Charles kept for other and sterner uses. The father's blessing was once more given to the children. Time was pressing, and they must go—his last links with earth. Charles turned away to the window while the children, weeping and wailing, were taken to the door. Then human nature proved too strong. Just as they reached the threshold Charles returned hastily from the window, crossed the room, snatched them up, and gave each one a last, fervent kiss. And so back to prayer.

Prayer—that seemed the one solace of this strange nature, so uncertain with man, so true to God. The long hours of this Sunday passed in every variety of devotion—now a sermon from the Bishop, with a text

aimed a little obscurely at the regicides¹; then prayers with the Bishop and Herbert, followed by the Sacrament, and more prayers. It was some hours after nightfall—perhaps about six o'clock—before the Bishop took his leave, his last kindly action being to dissuade Colonel Hacker from leaving two musketeers in the King's room—the King himself making no protest but a sigh.

We can picture the little room in St. James's Palace darkening with the early gloom of that winter evening. The last few glints of twilight die down as night descends over the park outside, and the King's chamber, never very well lighted through the diamond-paned casements, is shrouded in gloom. Candles are brought. The old divine, an aged, robed, sorrowful figure, wearied with his long day, rises to leave for his lodgings close by. The King—still, despite all his sufferings, the tall, stately man that Van Dyck has immortalized—receives the obeisance of the Bishop with a glow of affection in his bright eyes. He has eaten and drunk little that day, and already the sensitive face—that baffling countenance where pride and chivalry seem always in conflict—has cast off something of its mortal grossness. Charles seems already to be passing behind the veil.

The King sits down and resumes his book. For several hours longer the room is very silent. Herbert—the faithful, grief-stricken Herbert—sits and watches while his master wrestles with the last resistance of the flesh—now reading and now praying, now speechless in meditation, now breaking into the whispers of prayer. We can imagine that to Herbert's loving eyes it must have been a scene that recalled the deeper, holier agony of Gethsemane.

At last the King rises. He will go to rest. But on this last night of existence Charles perhaps felt the fear of loneliness upon him. He bids Herbert bring

¹ Rom ii 76

his mattress-couch from the next room and place it on the floor at the foot of his bed. Herbert obeys, and in a few minutes the room is wrapped in silence. The candles have been taken away, and only a single night-light—swimming in a dish of oil, after the fashion of that time—sheds a feeble glimmer. Herbert tosses to and fro on his hard pallet, full of the terror of the morrow. But the King, after a short time, falls into sweet slumber, and sleeps soundly for four hours.

Two hours before dawn—at about five o'clock—the curtains of the King's bed are drawn slowly asunder, and Charles looks out. Herbert has fallen into a restless sleep, tossing to and fro on his mattress. The King calls to him and bids him rise.

"I will get up," he says, "having a great work to do this day."

Then he asks Herbert why he was so troubled in his sleep. Herbert tells him that he has been dreaming—and on being pressed, describes to Charles how he has seen Archbishop Laud come into the room and kiss the King's hand, talk with him a while, sigh, pass out backwards, making such low obeisance that he finally fell face forwards on the ground.

"It was remarkable," says Charles, unmoved at the mention of Laud's name. "Perhaps," he adds slowly—and this was a remarkable phrase at such a moment—"if Laud had really conferred with me in life, I might have told him something that would have made him sigh."

So saying, Charles slid away from Herbert's unhappy mention of a name so unfortunate and ill-starred, and passed back to the high, almost ecstatic note to which he had been tuned by hours of prayer. He sent Herbert to fetch his finest garments.

"Herbert," he said in the mystical language of the day, "this is my second marriage-day. I would

be as trim to-day as maybe. For before night I hope to be espoused to my blessed Jesus."

He chose a long coat, grey stockings, and a gay waistcoat of red striped silk. Then he picked out one of the thickest shirts he could find.

"Let me have a shirt on more than ordinary," he said, "by reason the season is so sharp as probably may make me shake, which some observers will imagine proceeds from fear. I would have no such imputation. I fear not death! Death is not terrible to me. I bless my God I am prepared."

Charles had now drawn the sting of death, and he was in haste to finish. He was like one in love with his own doom. As the Bishop prayed with him that morning, Charles entered into a new phase. His spirits rose. He was now cheerful—almost merry. When at last the dread knock of Colonel Hacker was heard at the door, Herbert—poor, miserable, sleepless Herbert—had no heart to answer it. But the King replied for himself. "Let him come in."

Colonel Hacker entered and tremblingly told Charles that it was time to go to Whitehall. "I will come presently," said the King, perhaps desiring a few minutes of prayer to calm the shock of fluttering nerves. A few minutes, and he looked up to the Bishop with a serene face, "Come, let us go," and to Herbert, "Open the door, Hacker has given us a second warning."

They passed through the garden of St. James's Palace and opened the outer door. There, on the threshold of his great trial, Charles paused, handed his silver alarm-clock as a memento to Herbert, asked him the hour of the day, as if to note the periods of his suffering, and then stepped out.

The great spaces of St. James's Park, then practically open fields, were full of soldiery. The drums were beating so loudly "as one"—in Herbert's quaint phrase—"could hardly hear what another

spoke." Companies of foot lined the road along which Charles was to tread with barriers of steel, and a guard of halberdiers stood ready to escort him. Once more the generals were not going to run any risks.

We can still summon up a faithful picture of that walk across the park in the chill January morning through the lines of armed men—the little procession with one guard of steel-helmeted halberdiers in front and another behind, and, in the centre, the King between the Bishop and Colonel Thomlinson. Charles, say witnesses, "seemed in a great hurry" and walked rapidly, talking to Colonel Thomlinson.

Arriving at the stairs of old Whitehall Palace—where the Scotch Office now stands—Charles mounted and passed along the Galleries, crossed the Holbein Gate, and went to his old bedchamber. There he rested a while, and afterwards prayed with the Bishop.

Then he asked Herbert to bring him bread and wine. He drank "a small glassful of claret-wine," broke a "manchet" of bread, and waited.

There was a long pause.

Let us stand with the mingled crowd of Londoners that gathers steadily in Whitehall from dawn onwards on that day of January 30th, 1649. It is a crowd very much like that which assembles in London to-day to watch some great historic event—good-natured, tolerant, humane, not predominantly Puritan. For although London had supported the Parliament in the civil wars, yet it loved little this new rule of the armed, godly man, Oliver Cromwell. London was largely Presbyterian, and now partly Royalist.

Like all Londoners of to-day as well as of that day, they are anxious to see everything that is to be seen, and to be in at the finish. So they drift between Whitehall and the Tilting Ground, back from watching Charles walk across St. James's Park,

back to that fascinating, awful, arresting scaffold which now stands black and grim in front of the Banqueting House. The workmen are still busy on it, and the sound of the hammers comes clear across the open space. We cannot get nearer because between us and the scaffold there are already drawn up formidable forces of foot and cavalry to keep the spectators from close access. This military display seems to offend the crowd. For from this moment they become sullen and hostile.

Rumours sweep through the crowd. At the last moment, so it is said, there is to be a reprieve. It is well known that many great persons are working hard to obtain it. But Cromwell is in favour of death, and Cromwell is a man that gets his way. Perhaps Charles will escape, as he has escaped before. Who can tell?

Then the real cause of the delay becomes known. Cromwell is endeavouring to get a last batch of signatures to the death-warrant, for it is known that less than half of the tribunal have signed.¹ The "Rump" of the old House of Commons—the remnant left after the purge of Colonel Pride—is still sitting to pass an Act preventing the declaration of a successor.

Other reasons flit and flicker through the murmur of the crowd.

Charles is fatigued, and wants to rest. He is praying. The Puritans wish to avoid all appearance of cruelty. So pass the hours as the seething, growing mob presses closer to the Banqueting House.

Still the black-shrouded scaffold stands empty.

Twelve o'clock strikes. We see a stir at the small opening in the building just north of the Banqueting House. A little group of figures appears. They step through the window on to the scaffold. Two of them wear black masks which conceal their faces.

¹ Only 59 out of 135 Commissioners signed the death-warrant.

They are joined by a man in the surplice and sleeves of an English bishop—Juxon. Then a couple of Puritan officers, flashing in steel.

Last, the unmistakable centre of the tragedy—Charles himself. His long hair flows loose over his shoulders. He pauses and looks round. That tall, slim figure, that graceful bearing, even on the scaffold, all reveal the man.

A murmur passes through the crowd—almost a groan. It is the first time in England that the "Lord's Anointed" has ever been seen about to die in the presence of his people.

Charles stops and hesitates. He looks down at the little block—so small that we can scarcely see it from the roadway. He turns to one of the officers and makes some remark. Then he shrugs his shoulders and seems to forget. He takes off his cloak. He allows the executioner to place a silk skull-cap on his head and to push back his hair under the cap. He takes off his St. George's Star and hands it to Juxon, uttering, although we cannot hear it from below in the crowd, that famous, mysterious word, "Remember!"

Charles puts on his cloak again. Perhaps he feels cold.

Then, as if under an impulse, he suddenly steps forward to the edge of the scaffold and begins to speak. Down in the crowd we cannot hear what he says. It is drowned in the stamping of horses, the shouts of officers, the jingle of harness. His voice is thin, and we are so far away.

It is only afterwards that we get to know that in those last bitter moments Charles once more asserted the right of the King alone to rule his people, and once more denied with his last breath that the people had any right to interfere in such matters. It was as if the spirit speaking within him was bent on justifying his doom.

He has finished speaking. He is turning to his executioners and saying a few words. He puts out a hand to show the sign that he will give. Then he lies prone on the scaffold, placing his neck on the small block, which seems to us almost level with the floor.

The executioner comes forward. There is a pause. We cannot see, but Charles must have waved his hand. For the great axe flashes. The assistant kneels down picks up the head and shows it to the people.

"The head of a traitor!" he cries.

No sound of applause comes from the sullen crowd. On the contrary, there is a deep groan of horror, almost a movement of revolt. The crowd stirs angrily. There is violent shouting. Then the grim soldiers turn, and squadrons of cavalry ride up and down Whitehall dispersing the people to their homes. It is the army against the people.

Cromwell has had his way. But the real victor of that day is Charles. He has perished himself, but he has secured the resurrection of his cause.

* * * * *

The forlorn body of the King was carried from the scaffold to a little room at the north-eastern corner of the Banqueting House, and there it lay for that night. Lord Southampton and a friend asked leave to mount guard over the body of their King; and the Puritans, perhaps already alarmed at their deed and inclined to a relenting softness, permitted them to have their way.

As Lord Southampton and his friend were sitting "very melancholy," one on each side of the body, keeping their long night-watch; a very strange thing took place at the hour of two o'clock in the morning. At that hour the watchers heard the tread of somebody coming very slowly up the stairs. By and by the door opened, and a man entered, closely muffled up in his cloak; so closely that his face was quite

hidden. He slowly approached the body and gazed on it long and attentively.

Then he shook his head, and sighed out the words, "Cruel necessity!"

So saying, he turned and left the room in the same manner as he had entered it, still not withdrawing his cloak from his face.

But Lord Southampton and his friend then perceived from his gait and figure that the visitor was Oliver Cromwell.¹

¹ This story was told for the first time in Spence's *Anecdotes*, and was marked "P," which means that he heard it from Pope. Gardiner, the historian, accepted it in the belief that Pope heard it at second-hand from Lord Southampton (Gardiner's *History of the Great Civil War*, vol. iv, p. 329).

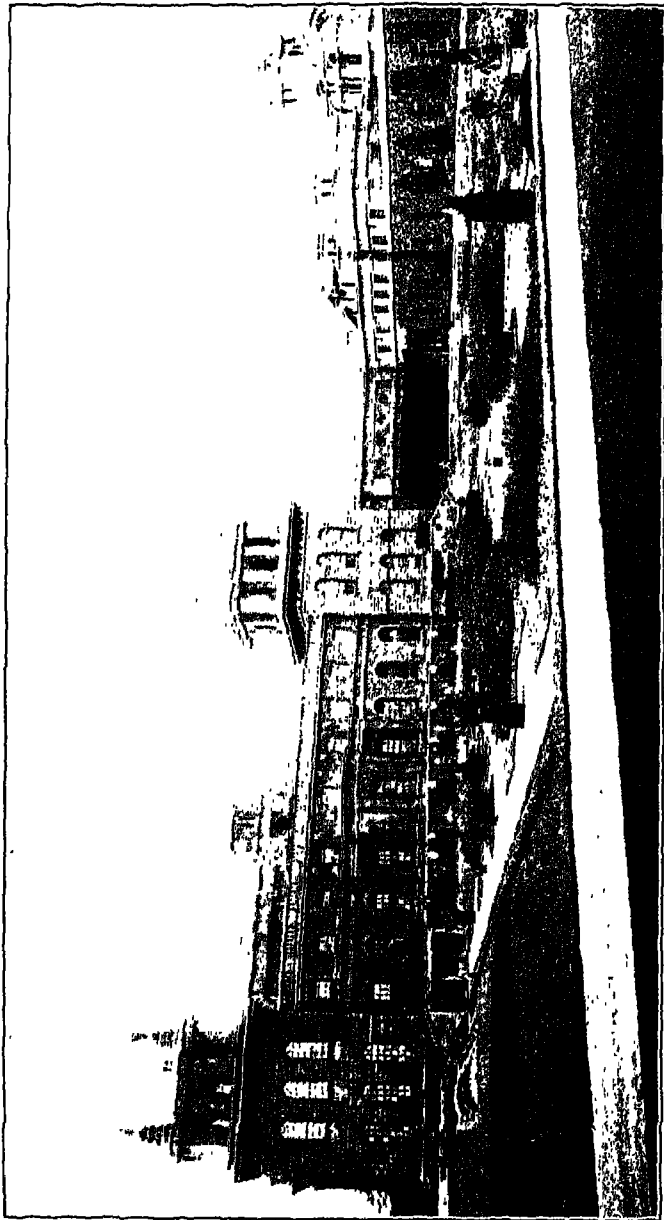
[NOTE.—The Banqueting House is now the Museum of the Royal United Services Institution, housed here since 1894: an extremely interesting collection of national military and naval relics. By paying one shilling the visitor can see both the Museum and the Banqueting Hall. There is a very charming and accurate historical model of the old Whitehall Palace.

X

Marlborough and Blenheim

" It was the English, Kaspar cried,
That put the French to rout ;
But what they killed each other for,
I could not well make out.
But everybody said, quoth he,
That 'twas a famous victory ! "

The Battle of Blenheim : SOUTHEY.



Photograph by H. Nelson King.

BLEMHEIM PALACE : The East Front.

X

Marlborough and Blenheim

STANDING on the hill by the side of the pillar which a worshipful widow erected to the great Marlborough, you look across to the great palace built to his fame. With its two vast wings and its magnificent colonnaded centre it stretches far. This is, indeed, not a mansion, but a palace.

This palace lies just ten miles north of Oxford, half-way to Banbury Cross; close to the little village of Woodstock, the seat of an ancient manor, and the chosen scene of one of Walter Scott's most famous stories.

The vast building stands some way outside the village, now a dependency to its glory, surrounded by a splendid park which is a little world in itself—with its lofty trees, its broad valley, its vast lake; a country-side subdued to the worship of one magnificent memory.

This great house—Blenheim—was the gift of a triumphant nation to its victorious general, and it still stands to-day as some measure of the deep relief felt by England after the crash of the Great Monarch. Standing there, we can realize how vast was the peril, how deep the gratitude.

Blenheim has been called "England's biggest house for England's biggest man." No building in this country has provoked more violent dispute. It has been attacked by satirists and scolded by artists. Perhaps only the grave laudation of Sir Joshua

Reynolds saved it from destruction. Yet, standing there, on that historic spot, it remains one of the greatest mansions and the greatest monuments of our English life.

The builder was that strange, gifted person, Sir John Vanbrugh, who played so many parts in the varied life of his time. Soldier, artist, dramatist, and architect—

“A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind’s epitome.”

At any rate, he left a deep mark on two great spheres of English life—our drama and our architecture. The man who built Castle Howard and designed Stowe House cannot, after all, be set aside as a “buffoon.”

But the greatest of all the buildings achieved by Sir John Vanbrugh was, undoubtedly, Blenheim Palace.

Vanbrugh’s work was “winged” by a famous epitaph—the epitaph of Dr. Evans, the wit :

“Lie heavy on him, earth ! for he
Laid many heavy loads on thee.”

With that epitaph the work of Blenheim, Castle Howard and Stowe, seemed to receive a fatal wound. But it left the true enthusiasts of Vanbrugh quite cold. For it was the essential aim of all these buildings that they should be magnificent, colossal, and far-spreading. They must “lie heavy,” for they represented an attempt to use architecture as an expression of man’s pride. Domestic comfort seemed to Vanbrugh but a trifle to that great aim. Magnificence was his very soul.

So Vanbrugh thought little of placing his kitchens—as here at Blenheim—many hundreds of yards away from his dining-rooms ; or, as at Stowe, in placing his bedrooms where neither light nor air

can freely circulate. Display was his aim, and pomp was his object. He breathed the spirit of his age, and especially of that splendid English nobility of the early eighteenth century. In that sense Vanbrugh filled his part and expressed a mood.

But the real trouble that proved fatal to the art of Vanbrugh was—its expense. As Wyatt shrewdly pointed out in conversation with Farington (December 22nd, 1798), Vanbrugh's art missed all its effect unless it was carried out on the largest possible scale.¹ It required unlimited space and material, and also unlimited cash.

So it was that very few great families could survive the cost of Vanbrugh. At Blenheim he exhausted the gratitude of a nation and the purse of a Duchess. The Duke alone might probably have allowed Vanbrugh to ruin him. But the Duchess Sarah was not of that kind. That self-willed lady was determined not to be ruined. She preferred—curiously enough—to live solvent in a villa than to live bankrupt in a palace. It was a rare taste in those days.

But Vanbrugh might well have taken as his motto the famous saying of the Stoic Roman Emperor: "Even in a palace life can be lived well." In all these houses Vanbrugh held before him an ideal of capacious living, generous, splendid, free-handed. It was not his fault if England of the early eighteenth century, after her phase of warlike extravagance, passed—like us to-day—into the mood of thrift; if, in the morasses of peace, she soon forgot the glamour of war. Vanbrugh could not be expected to forecast such changes of mood. It is almost pathetic, indeed, to read the story of how this innocent architect, spending freely in the phase of victory, was finally left high and dry by the disillusion of peace.

Vanbrugh was already a great man when he started

¹ *The Farington Diary*, vol. i, p. 257.

Blenheim. Thanks to the influence of the Earl of Carlisle, who was delighted with his building of Castle Howard, he had become "Controller of the Royal Works." He found himself at Woodstock with practically unlimited powers. Queen Anne, in her first flush of gratitude after the victory of Blenheim, had given to Marlborough the whole rights to the "Royal and Historic Manor" of Woodstock, along with 22,000 acres of land. Parliament had made a first grant of £100,000. It looked as if these resources would be adequate, even for Vanbrugh.

In June of 1705 the foundation-stone was laid amid great rejoicings at Woodstock, and a large number of free-handed gentry threw guineas under the foundation-stone. It was a pity, perhaps, that they wasted those golden coins. For it became soon clear that every available sovereign would be wanted.

If Vanbrugh had been left to himself, he might have kept within his estimate. But he was soon absorbed in a tempestuous series of contentions with the Duchess of Marlborough. Vanbrugh's designs, indeed, with their vast colonnades and their great Corinthian fronts, spelled outlay at every turn. But the Duchess was equally costly. For it was not, indeed, Vanbrugh's extravagances that were vetoed by the Duchess. It was generally any little remainders of thrift.

Vanbrugh, for instance, quite rightly desired to keep intact the old, decayed manor-house of Woodstock, as a picturesque feature in the landscape. But Sarah objected, and the old building was swept away. Then the Duchess insisted on that bridge across the valley, which remains to-day as a colossal survival of exhausted glory.

The bridge was built on a scale out of all proportion to the house; it was topped with houses, which have since been destroyed. There was no stream to bridge, and if there had been, the bridge would

have been too much for any stream. Horace Walpole wittily said of the little trickle that flowed under the bridge: "Like the beggars at the old duchess's gate, it begged for a drop of water and was refused." It went on begging until at last it was more than satisfied. For it became necessary to excavate a lake in order to suit the bridge, and so the money flowed away.

The building and the quarrelling went on steadily side by side. The bitterness between Vanbrugh and the Duchess Sarah reached its first breaking-point in 1710, when the Duchess suddenly stopped the work and discharged the workmen. It is true that the building was still without a roof. But what did that matter in view of the peril which faced the Marlboroughs? For in that year Mrs. Masham had taken the place of the Duchess Sarah at the Court of Queen Anne; the Whigs were out of office, Harley was triumphant, and to ask for more money for Blenheim was as futile as for dogs to bay at the moon.

Altogether, up to that year, £200,000 had been spent on Blenheim out of the national exchequer. Another £100,000 was still wanted to complete the building. But it was five years since the battle of Blenheim, and the financial "axes" of those days were hard at work. They went on working. Two years later, in 1712, Vanbrugh was dismissed and Blenheim was left derelict.

But once more there was to be a turn of the wheel. Another two years passed. Queen Anne died, and from distant Hanover the German-speaking George I came sulkily across Europe to occupy the throne which he did not desire. The Tories fell as rapidly as they had risen, and the Whigs once more took their places. Marlborough returned from his refuge on the Continent, and his first step was to introduce Vanbrugh to the new king, who knighted him on the spot.

Vanbrugh—now Sir John Vanbrugh—went back to Blenheim and began building again, this time at the Duke's cost. But the new phase did not last long. The Duke, distracted between Blenheim and the Duchess Sarah—torn by the conflicts between his wife and his architect—suffered a stroke of paralysis in 1716, and fell into an illness which reduced him to the condition of a child. The Duchess resumed her power, and carried out her revenge. This time she actually excluded Vanbrugh from the precincts of Blenheim; therein anticipating the policy of the Egyptian Government towards English excavators!

"Blenheim" was to be finished by another hand. It was not, indeed, completed until many years after Vanbrugh's own death in 1726, and the Duchess herself was still mending and patching when she passed away in 1744—at the great age of eighty-four.

Such are the vicissitudes of those who raise great mansions!

The sentence passed on them is too often that passed on a certain rich man two thousand years ago—"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

Yet the mansion thus constructed stands, as perfect as ever, looking over the valley filled with the artificial lake and surrounded with the forests which, according to Wyatt, were planted to represent the divisions and battalions of Marlborough's victorious army.¹

To-day, the palace is freely open to the public, and multitudes wander through its chambers of reception, and even into that beautiful library where the family largely live. The Churchills, like the Cavendishes at Chatsworth, have the instinct of "trust in the people."

The rooms no longer contain that great wealth of

¹ *The Farington Diary*, vol. i, p. 258.

pictures described by Farington in his Diary. As all the world knows, they were scattered and sold by the last duke—whose mode of living was not adapted to the simplicity required by the pension of £5,000 a year still to-day allotted by the nation to the Churchills for the victory of Blenheim.

But although many classic pictures have gone, there is still a fine gallery of family portraits, and especially the great Joshua Reynolds' portrait of the Marlborough of his day.

The rooms are not the rooms of a private mansion. They are the chambers of a national institution. They represent a time when our highest nobility took on the pomp of royalty. They let you into the true secret of modern English history—which is that, after the royal power was destroyed, England was governed for many generations by a group of little kings.

* * * *

Such is the mighty structure raised to the glory of Marlborough.

Now let us look at the man himself.

Marlborough really represented the afterglow of the British Civil War. For it was in that atmosphere that he was brought up. He was the son of Sir Winston Churchill—how the names recur!—a small Cavalier squire who had ruined himself in the service of that perilous master, King Charles I. He was also the grandson of Sir John Drake, a descendant of the great hero of Devonshire. The civil wars brought poverty and unrest to the English youth cradled in their atmosphere. The lullaby of those children was the trumpet; their plaything the drum; their first insight into the world came through the clouds of war. Beaten at home, the young Cavaliers sought adventure abroad. We can see to-day around us how the atmosphere of the Great War has produced the same restless, uneasy

English type—hungry for adventure, brought up on the great motto of ancient Pistol :

“ The world’s mine oyster, which I with sword will open.”

The young John Churchill opened that oyster swiftly. Profiting by the shame of his own sister Arabella, he rose to influence in the Court of the Duke of York. He obtained a commission in the Guards. He first fought in the foreign wars on the side of Louis XIV, and learned the art of war under the great Turenne—the predecessor of those French generals whom he was destined to defeat and humiliate in after-days. He served James II faithfully at home and abroad, smashing the perilous revolt of the Duke of Monmouth on the field of Sedgemoor, and bringing that unhappy young man to the scaffold.

Then honestly, or dishonestly—honestly, I think—Churchill developed a passionate strain of Protestantism. Quite early in his career he announced that he would refuse to follow any King of England who became a Roman Catholic.

When, therefore, James II started on that course of Roman violence which led him to the edge of the precipice, Churchill weakened his allegiance. So when, too, William III landed at Torbay, there followed that famous and memorable act of desertion. General Churchill, clearly England’s greatest soldier, and already the arbiter of thrones, left James, and slipped away by night to join the Dutch king and conduct him to London.

From that time forward, throughout William’s reign, Churchill’s career became one of dizzy zig-zags—of baffling twists and turns: first to St. James’s and then to Versailles, intriguing with the exile James even when he pretended to be most faithful to the reigning king.

Twice he was arrested for treason, and twice he was released. Once he even betrayed to the French

king an English expedition launched against Brest. William III knew all Churchill's failings, and yet could not afford, or dare, to destroy him. But he would not employ him on any great services, and it was not until William III died, and Queen Anne ascended the throne, that Churchill's chance really came.

For the next decade the Churchills really ruled England through the weak Queen Anne. Churchill himself was instantly created Commander of the Forces. His wife became the supreme influence at Court. He soon swung Queen Anne into the continental campaign after which he had so long yearned.

Churchill ruled England through those years of war, and he impoverished her. He glorified himself, and filled his pockets. The best we can say of that war is that it weakened Louis Quatorze and prevented the Grand Monarch from dominating Europe.

Louis, indeed, delivered himself into the hands of Marlborough from the moment that he befriended and recognized the exiled Stuart king. By that act he united Protestant England against Catholic France. But when the whole record is wound up, it is by no means certain that Harley and Bolingbroke were not right in their main principle of "splendid isolation." For the weakening of France was dearly bought by the bankruptcy of England.

Perhaps, after all, Marlborough did not think very profoundly on these matters. He was by no means a statesman. The best contemporary opinion is that he was a man of little political depth. Lord Chesterfield, that astute critic, pronounced Marlborough to be just a man of "plain understanding and sound judgment."

He was, indeed, a poor speaker, and the best of the letters published in the voluminous correspondence put together by Archdeacon Coxe¹ are those written

¹ *Memoirs of the Duke of Marlborough, with his Original Correspondence*, by W. Coxe, Archdeacon of Wilts. London (1846).

to his wife, especially those touching and pathetic scribblings sent from the field of battle. Next to his wife, he loved war. He was, indeed, too much in love with war to make even a fair peacemaker. Like the great Lord Chatham, he could realize no possible peace except the peace of complete victory.

He did not understand the statesmanship that would end a war with a compromise. He could not realize that a short war with a poor peace is sometimes better than a good peace after a long war.

Certainly Marlborough might have escaped his final humiliation and the duress of his two years' exile (from 1712 to 1714) if he had realized that there are limits to the endurance of a nation, and that the humiliation of a foreign country is not the only road to prosperity and to comfort.

"It is the folly of too many," says Dean Swift in that brilliant pamphlet wherein he defended Harley and Bolingbroke, "to mistake the echo of a London coffee-house for the voice of the Kingdom."

It was that mistake that Marlborough made, and so bitterly expiated.

Blenheim, after all, seems a fit memorial of that high-stepping life.

For although he did not care for luxury, he was one of those human beings who require a large stage. We can see him now in his pictures—with his full-bottomed wig, his great three-cornered hat and his gigantic top-boots, bestriding his high horse across the battle-fields of Flanders. He required a monument so big that life was too short for him to build it. So big that even the Duchess after him could not complete it before death came.

"The Duchess"—there we touch the one soft spot in a hard and brutal career. Churchill betrayed many men, including two kings. He pursued his own pitiful gains across a whole continent, and he persisted in a desolating war long after its objects

had been attained. But he was always true to Sarah Jennings. When we read the passionate record of Sarah's tempers, her stormy sacrifice of all Churchill's highest aims because she could not restrain that vixen vehemence of hers, we grow more and more astonished at Churchill's forbearance. He just worshipped Sarah Jennings.

All his letters to Sarah are love-letters. From start to finish of that strange partnership he suffered under her tempers, but he never complained. When Sarah kept the peace with Queen Anne, Marlborough prospered, and he was grateful. When she quarrelled with Queen Anne, Marlborough suffered, and he bowed the head. When it was a political rival that stood in his path, Churchill could fight fiercely and deliver ruthless blows. But when it was Sarah, he surrendered without discretion, and retired—with her—from the field.

In his days of defeat and disgrace we see him proudly withdrawing—with Sarah—to the Continent which he had so often devastated. No word of reproach escapes his lips. The proud victor had been undone by a woman's tongue. But he is still faithful to the woman.

Marlborough's victories were very costly in blood. For ten years the spring brought a blood-bath for English youth. He won all his battles—but at the cost of the race.

But then consider against whom and what he was fighting! He was contending against the greatest monarch of Europe, supported by the most numerous and the most militant people.

He was challenging with the resources of a small, under-populated island, the might of a great European conqueror at the topmost point of its power.

Then reflect on Marlborough's resources for this struggle. He had nothing but a small English expeditionary force, constantly requiring to be

recruited from home, and fighting in alliance with the least military of all European nations, the Dutch.

Amid all the surprising things about Churchill's military career, perhaps the most surprising is that, throughout all those years, he continued to tolerate the Dutch as allies in war.

Like Cæsar and Napoleon, Marlborough intensely desired to convert his victories into political power. He was never content with military conquest. Although not a statesman he was a past-master of the arts of personal intrigue. Again and again we see him coming home to seize upon a situation and to master it. He appears in London crowned with laurel-wreaths from the fields of victory. He brushes aside all the petty craftsmen of Whitehall and St. James's Park. He dominates first the King, and then afterwards his daughter. He sways the Court, and he governs the populace.

If only he could have stayed on the spot, he might indeed have achieved the dictatorship, and perhaps even the Crown! But to stay on the spot he had to agree to make peace: and that was the one thing he never could do.

Marlborough could stand peace in the autumn and winter, when the armies withdrew regularly into winter quarters. But with the spring his fancy "lightly turned" again to thoughts of war. It was by war that he had built up his reputation. It was in war that he really shone. He was probably the greatest British soldier that ever lived. Ambitious to be king in England, he was really a king on the battle-field; so it was for the battle-field that he always yearned.

Thus year after year this war dragged on, and spring after spring for nine years—from 1702 right on to 1711—Marlborough went away to win fresh laurels. But although he won victory after victory, he could never achieve the decisive blow. Louis

Quatorze bled and suffered, and France grew more and more desolate. But Marlborough could never get to Paris. Bloody victory succeeded bloody victory—Ramillies (1706), Oudenarde (1708), Malplaquet (1709)—each bloodier than the last, and each producing less and less effect as payment for the cost of triumph—

“ And everybody praised the Duke
Who such a fight did win—
But what good came of it at last ?
Quoth little Peterkin—
Why that I cannot tell, said he,
But 'twas a famous victory.”

Old Kaspar's view was very much that of the contemporary world. The losses were appalling. But no result seemed to accrue. As Swift said in that bitter pamphlet, *The Conduct of the Allies* :

“ Ten glorious campaigns are passed: and now at last, like the sick man, we are just expiring with all sorts of good symptoms.”

When Louis offered terms, Marlborough resisted. The terms were never sufficient. He went to The Hague himself and wrecked the peace. He carried on the war for another three years.

Then arose the famous revolt of the Tories under Harley and St. John, with Dean Swift as their writer—one of the most powerful political combinations in the whole of British history. The politicians and the scribbler between them fought Marlborough to a stand. They captured the Tory Party, and the Tory Party captured the House of Commons. The Duchess became a Whig, and captured the House of Lords. The Tories captured the Crown, and the Crown swamped the House of Lords. Thus at last—after immense internal convulsions—Marlborough's designs were defeated, and England was brought to sign the peace of Utrecht in April, 1713.

It was high time. For the war had been carried on for ten years, and England was exhausted. France was ready for a reasonable peace. No purpose remained to be achieved except the further glorification of the Duke of Marlborough.

That glorification has, at any rate, left one mark on our English landscape. For it has left us, far-seen across its valley, this mighty, wide-stretching palace of Blenheim!

NOTE.—Blenheim, easily accessible from Oxford, can be visited on Tuesdays and Fridays for a small fee.

XI

The Elder Pitt and "Pitt House"

"You may have revenge. You cannot conquer. It is impossible. You cannot conquer the Americans."—
Chatham to the House of Lords, May, 1877.



Portrait by R. Brompton. The National Portrait Gallery.

THE ELDER PITT: Earl of Chatham.

XI

The Elder Pitt and "Pitt House"

ON the north-western slopes of the hill of Hampstead, there stands a lofty, white mansion in the centre of a large and secluded garden.

It commands a magnificent view over the Hendon valley and the slopes beyond. It is now known as "Pitt House."

It is at present in possession of Lord Clarendon. But its whole history is bound up with the elder Pitt, the great Lord Chatham. He is the Man of this Mansion.

He inhabited, indeed, many mansions in the course of his long and magnificent career—"Burton Pynsent," in Wiltshire; "Hayes," in Surrey; and often, as brother-in-law to Lord Temple, the great house at Stowe.

But of all these dwellings, "Pitt House," although only held by him as a tenant for little more than a year, marks the most dramatic moment in his stormy life.

For it was in this house that Pitt, recently raised to his Earldom, and still the First Minister of the Crown, collapsed into that terrible illness which shut him off from mankind through the critical autumn and winter of 1767. There he lay for all those months dead to the world and lost to his friends; invisible to the Cabinet of which he was the Chief; unable to receive or speak with even the King himself.

While Pitt lay there, those tremendous and calamitous decisions of hostility towards America developed in Cabinet and Parliament, and took effect without a controlling or restraining word from Pitt. That seclusion at "Pitt House" lost us America.

For when Pitt recovered, the American War had become irrevocable. That event was already "portion and parcel of the dreadful past." From that time forward, to the end of his life, Pitt could only warn, denounce and condemn. He could never regain the power to control or decide.

Thus "Pitt House" cost England an empire!

Pitt's illness took place in two little rooms at the top of this plain, lofty building. Within those rooms Pitt deliberately confined himself. There, in those small chambers—"cribbed, cabined and confined"—he lived the life of a "solitary," shutting himself off from sight or sound of all friendly human beings. There he remained in a voluntary hermitage, secluded from the world, barred and bolted off from mankind. His seclusion was complete and absolute.

Approach these rooms with a certain awe. For it is as if some tragic Presence dwelt there; some shadow of tremendous Destiny, with power to put asunder even those things which God hath joined together.

You mount to the little, high-placed chambers by a winding staircase, banistered, with a balustrade most delicately carved and embellished. The staircase climbs from a small landing, panelled all around with those exquisite achievements of stained and painted wood which were the pride and delight of the eighteenth century.

The only entrance into the "Pitt Rooms" to-day is by way of the inner room, through a small door which has been cut since Pitt's time. The two rooms

are now thrown into one, and you pass from one to the other through a doorless architrave.

A small bed stands on your left-hand side as you enter the outer room; and the wall on the right is hung with engravings of the two Pitts, hung on the wall above a line of oaken, cabinet drawers. Those drawers are docketed with printed lettering, thus: "Trust Deeds"—"Correspondence." The lettering is Pitt's, and proves, at any rate, that he still possessed a mind.

The floor of the inner room was once marked with the ruts of Pitt's wheeled chair; and the marks remained until a busily renovating tenant removed the old flooring and substituted parquet. We may fairly surmise from those ruts on the flooring that Pitt's bed stood in the inner room, and that he wheeled himself during the day into the outer.

Enter this outer room, and you will soon see why the afflicted statesman, suffering and self-absorbed, wheeled himself from the gloom of the inner chamber. For the room is lighted with a large and beautiful oriel bay window, which commands a wide prospect over the valley that lies on the north side of Hampstead. In Pitt's day that valley was little inhabited. But even so, it was too thickly inhabited for the sick Prime Minister.

For at one phase of his terrible illness, Pitt demanded that all the houses in the valley should be unroofed in order that his view might be left untainted with any symptom or sign of human presence.

How many hours Pitt must have sat in that room—gazing, in his deep silence, over that countryside! How many sad thoughts must have passed through his sick brain!

But far and away the most extraordinary feature of these rooms concerns the door at the head of the bed in the corner of the outer chamber. The

door is now sealed ; but in Pitt's time it was the only entrance into the rooms, and the servants were probably ordered by Lady Chatham to open it in order to take in Lord Chatham's meals.

It was just this opening of the door and the visit of the servant that Pitt could not abide. For he suffered from some morbid fear of human presence. This great ruler of men could no longer bear the sight of his kind.

So at that point in his illness the sick statesman invented a means by which these entrances became impossible and superfluous.

In the very centre of the door there is a small hatchway, still preserved precisely as it was left when Pitt went away to his beloved "Hayes." Through this hatchway all Pitt's food was passed. It is constructed of two small panel-doors, with a space in the centre. A little padlock is attached.

At every meal-time, the maid, standing outside in the passage, opened the outside panel. She thrust the food into the space within, and then, shutting her panel, went away. As soon as Pitt was certain of her departure, he unlocked the padlock, opened his panel, and took out the food. When he had finished this meal, he put back the plates, and the maid came and removed them. Thus meal after meal could pass without his seeing a single human face ; and so he achieved a triumphant isolation.

Such were the proceedings of the man who, less than ten years before, had led a world in arms ; the great statesman who had raised the British Empire to the highest pinnacle of its glory.

So near to dust is our human glory !

Did Pitt allow Lady Chatham, the devoted Hester Grenville, to come within those rooms ? We do not know. We only know that through that terrible time Lady Chatham worked for him, wrote his

letters, watched over his interests. Many of the sad and sorry letters that professed to come from the Earl during these months are in Lady Chatham's handwriting. While her husband lay there inert, Lady Chatham toiled to save him and his cause from utter ruin. Truly, the woman helped the man.

His *Correspondence*, published fifty years after Pitt's death,¹ revealed all the hidden secrets of those weeks and months.

Day by day the letters from outside became more pressing and urgent. His colleagues, divided and distracted, clamoured for interviews. The King, who behaved throughout in a friendly, fatherly way, urged Pitt to try rides on horseback. The Duke of Grafton, at last, after many months, obtained one interview at the urgent request of the King himself.

Chatham must have emerged from his two little rooms for that interview. But the Duke of Grafton gained little by it. Chatham sat with his head on his hands. He answered no questions. He had no counsel to give—except that he would not resign. The Duke went away empty-handed.

May—June—July—passed. The Cabinet was reconstructed. The fatal tea-tax policy was adopted. The brilliant, erratic Charles Townshend had his way.

Then a new craving seized on Chatham. He could never get well at Hampstead! He longed to get back to "Hayes," his old, well-beloved house which he had sold to Thomas Walpole.

But it seemed impossible. He no longer possessed any rights over "Hayes." He had let it to Thomas Walpole. Then in October came a welcome surprise. Thomas Walpole nobly offered to give "Hayes"

¹ *The Correspondence of the Earl of Chatham*, edited by William Stanhope Taylor and Captain Pringle, executors of his son John, Earl of Chatham. In 4 vols. London, 1840.

back to Chatham. In Lady Chatham's writing, a letter went back from Chatham gladly and gratefully accepting.

"No letter," he wrote to Walpole, "ever conveyed so essential a proof of the kindest friendship and goodness."

Then at last Pitt emerged from his rooms and left "Pitt House."

It was high time.

By the following October (1768) he had, at any rate, sufficiently recovered the balance of his reason to write from "Hayes" resigning his Premiership, and leaving an office which he could no longer properly fill.

Such is the story of "Pitt House."

During those fatal months, Pitt's Coalition Ministry, never very united or well balanced, staggered on amid conflicting counsels: half of them for peace with America, and half of them against it.

George III, already resolute to assert his will over America, was easily able to prevail over these hesitating minds.

The one powerful intellect gifted with full perception of the folly of this quarrel, the one Englishman who loved the Americans with a passionate affection, was laid away as completely as if hidden in a living tomb.

There is no more amazing episode in the whole of English history.

What was the nature of the malady from which Chatham was suffering when he was thus confined to these little rooms in this house at Hampstead?

He had never been a strong man, and he had suffered from gout even when he was a young cornet of horse. He had been a moderate drinker. But his doctor, a splendid friend who always gave him the worst possible medical advice, gradually compelled him to drink far more than was good for him.

His gout naturally became a great deal worse. The idea of his doctor was that Pitt should "draw out" the gout by a liberal consumption of port. He succeeded only too well.

The first onset of this grave phase of the malady had taken him while he was staying in Bath in February, 1767. He had built himself a beautiful house there, still standing in all its glory—No. 7, The Circus. He had been spending the Christmas recess in that house at Bath. But in February it became necessary to call together Parliament in order to provide more money for the Government. His Ministers urged him to come up from Bath. For a time he was totally unable to move. But the situation in London became worse, because the landlords cut down the land-tax and threw the whole of the Government's finances into confusion.

Pitt's Ministers redoubled their entreaties that Pitt should come to London.

At last he made a great effort, started from Bath for London, fell ill half-way, and lay at Marlborough half dead for several weeks. Then in March he resumed his journey, and reached this house, then called "Northend," leased by him at Hampstead.

There his illness took the new and terrible form which condemned him to that fearful seclusion. It looks as if the gout had been driven inwards by these exertions, and had attacked the nervous centres. All the symptoms—the utter melancholia, the refusal to see human faces, the dread of company, the incapacity for consecutive thought, the deadness to emotion—point to what we call nowadays a "nervous breakdown."

There is no proof of delusion, and therefore we cannot say that Chatham was mad. He afterwards lived to what was at that time a considerable old age. He outlived most of his contemporaries.

It was, indeed, after this illness that Chatham

emerged and, face to face with the appalling situation that had arisen, uttered in the House of Lords that series of appeals and denunciations which have given him his position as perhaps the greatest of all English orators.

Those who read these great pleadings which Lord Chatham addressed to the nation between 1774 and 1778, cannot doubt that his genius, however much afflicted, was finally restored to its highest power.

There is one possibility. Perhaps Chatham unconsciously took refuge in these rooms at Hampstead from the bad doctoring of his age. He escaped from being bled to death, which was the normal fate of a sick man in those times. It is possible indeed, that the mental rest he thus obtained was the proper remedy for his disease. I observed in measuring the hatchway at "Pitt House" that there was scarcely room for the intrusion of a bottle of port!

"Pitt House" is not merely a monument of Pitt's illness. It also reveals him as a passionate lover of beauty in his surroundings. It is one of the most exquisite suburban houses of the eighteenth century. It is panelled throughout with that delicate mastery of detail which made our ancestors such great room-makers—panelling so infinitely preferable to our modern wall-papers.

The mouldings of the ceiling and the carvings of the staircase make "Pitt House" a fairy palace of the finest workmanship; and yet it possesses several of those large, well-windowed rooms which the men of the eighteenth century were the first Englishmen to love. The old dining-room which Pitt used for his Cabinet has been used as a nursery. The babies have babbled where the statesmen prattled. All round the house is a large, terraced garden.

Truly such houses as these are the most precious possessions of England. They are the heritage which we have received from ancestors of nobler vision

and larger leisure. They are the temples of our past.

* * * *

Was there any element of wilfulness in this disastrous episode? Could Pitt have "pulled himself together" if he had so desired? That is still an open question.

There was always something "dæmonic" about this great person, Lord Chatham. That power of blazing energy which he showed during the Seven Years' War perhaps inflamed that side of his nature. Gentle enough in private life, a tender husband and father, in public Pitt could always be tiger-like and terrible.

His nephew, Lord Camelford, who knew him well, and was most affectionately brought up by him, left this testimony:

"When he was angry or in earnest, no one could look him in the face."

There speaks not merely the nephew, but also the man of affairs; and the testimony is borne out by other judges.

At the time of his greatest power, the House of Commons trembled at Pitt's rising. Men feared his eye, as they afterwards feared the eye of the great Gladstone.

Lord Chesterfield, who watched him throughout with a keen, sceptical vision, and heard him often in the House of Lords, wrote of him:

"He carried with him unpremeditated the strength of thunder and the splendour of lightning."

Who can doubt that judgment who reads to-day the scathing and terrible invectives of his American speeches, especially when he was roused by that awful side of the American War, the employment of the Red Indians against our white colonists—

"Who is the man that, in addition to these disgraces and mischiefs of our army, has dared to authorize and associate to our arms the tomahawk and scalping-knife of the savage: to call into civilized alliance the wild and inhuman savage of the woods—to delegate to the merciless Indian the defence of disputed rights—and to wage the horrors of his barbarous war against our brethren?"

When do we hear nowadays such bold, plain, splendid utterances? Such flashing appeals to our common humanity? When, indeed?

But men pay heavily for rising to such sublime heights. There is madness among the precipices. It is difficult to live perpetually amid the snows.

So when the elder Pitt took an average, human course, he became the scorn of men. He allowed his wife to receive a pension—and men sniffed. He took a peerage—and men scoffed. The "Great Commoner" take a peerage!

Lord Chesterfield echoed the comment of the London drawing-rooms when "Mr. Pitt" became "Lord Chatham":

"The Joke here is that he has had a *fall upstairs*, and has done himself so much hurt, that he will never be able to stand upon his legs again. Everybody is puzzled how to account for the step—and in my mind it can have but two causes: either he means to retire from business, or he has been the dupe of Lord Bute and his lady."

The simpler and truer reason was that Pitt was tired and ill. But, of course, no one could admit such a mere human frailty of this great Olympian.

"To withdraw, in the fullness of power, and in the utmost gratification of his ambition, from the House of Commons (which procured him his power, and which alone could insure it to him) and to go into that House of Incurables, the House of Lords, is a measure so unaccountable that nothing but proof positive could have made me believe it: but true it is.

King George III, who suffered much from Pitt's lightnings in his later years, told Dr. Fisher many years after that the elder Pitt was "not a competent judge of composition and wrote but indifferently."¹

George III himself was no judge at all either of composition or of oratory. The letters of Chatham to his son and nephew survive to-day to show that Chatham could write, when moved, almost as well as he could speak.

But he was essentially an orator: and always an impromptu orator. He did not write his speeches, like Burke, and publish them afterwards. He was moved by the moment.

He was badly reported. His son afterwards said that he had never been faithfully reported. But the best of his speeches survive in phrases and sentences too noble to have been invented.

Such oratory as Chatham's calls for great outputs of fiery, concentrated energy, and makes heavy draughts on the strongest constitutions. The slings and arrows of ruthless public criticism completed the exhaustion. Few human frames could stand such long periods of fierce activity. Payment had to be made.

If we will not spare our great men, we must expect to pay the price of losing them. No small penalty: for the greatness of a nation depends on its great men; and national ingratitude brings a heavy penalty.

Such a penalty England paid when Pitt collapsed into silence and darkness at "Pitt House" in 1767. The collapse came at the end of great anxieties—after his quarrel with Temple; after he had become the target of concentrated abuse and defamation. England was treating one of her great men after

¹ *The Farington Diary*, vol. i, p. 20.

her usual manner—with one of her Saturnalian orgies of slander, suspicion, and savagery.

One man collapsed : but the whole of England suffered. For, in this case, the penalty was high. It was nothing less than the loss of a continent.

XII

Burke and "Gregories"

"You would have served them, but they were not to be served. You would have healed wounds, private and public. There is more wisdom in your ardour than in their cold and overreaching discretion."—*Henry Grattan's letter to Edmund Burke*, March 14th, 1795.

"We do not dissent when Macaulay, after reading Burke's works over again, exclaims: 'How admirable! The greatest man since Milton!'"—MORLEY.



Portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds. The National Portrait Gallery.

EDMUND BURKE.

XII

Burke and "Gregories"

SOME twenty miles out of London to the north-west, in the county of Buckinghamshire, lies a famous village, with broad, open streets and black-beamed cottages, known to the world as Beaconsfield.

This village has played a great part in English political life. It has given its heraldic name to a man of transcendent genius, who, unaided, climbed to the heights of power. Hughenden, the favourite home of the great Jew who ruled over England in the later nineteenth century, using as his janissaries the oldest families of a famous aristocracy, lies a few miles outside the village.

But the village of Beaconsfield has a greater claim to fame than even the memory of Disraeli and his neighbourhood. For just outside the village stood "Gregories" the chosen home of Edmund Burke, that great Irishman who, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, rose to be our greatest British orator and political writer.

To-day, a century and a quarter after his death, the fame of Burke stands as high as ever. That great mountain-peak of human wisdom and character seems, indeed, to become more lofty to the eye as we recede from it. Burke in retrospect towers above all his contemporaries. As we read and re-read his utterances, we realize that here was a man who spoke not so much to his own generation as to all

time and all humanity. The music of his prose becomes richer and mellower with the passage of the years. His character flushes as pure gold in the sunset of memory. We see in him a man who, whatever his errors of judgment or opinion, had the single eye, the single aim, the single purpose. He always passionately pursued the good.

What part did this mansion "Gregories," his house at Beaconsfield, play in the making of this man?

Let us see.

To-day scarce a trace remains. A handsome modern villa now stands in the centre of the grounds owned by Edmund Burke, but not on the actual site of the house. All that is left of the site—which lies at some little distance within the grounds—is a long, low, grassy terrace in front of a hedge which divides the fields where Burke's gardens flowered and faded. "Gregories" itself was destroyed by fire in 1814. For some years after Burke's death it was still occupied by his widow. Then came the fire—and total annihilation. It was as if the house refused long to survive so great a memory: as if it scorned the common daily tasks after an episode so heroic.

It had been occupied for twenty years by Edmund Burke in the height of his fame. It had resounded to the talk and laughter of England's greatest wits and orators—of Fox and Sheridan, of Goldsmith and Johnson, of Reynolds and Gibbon. It refused to play a smaller part.

Within sight of the house was the tower of the parish church of Beaconsfield. It was because Burke could not abide the sight of that tower after his beloved son, Richard, had been buried in the aisle of the church, that he left Beaconsfield. He went to Bath, but returned, smitten by some obscure disease which was sapping his life. His heart was

broken, and within a few months he was buried in the same grave as his son. There in the church you can see the grave to-day, and around it are all the pious memorials and monuments that have been raised by the respect and reverence of the Burke family and the British race.

All that remains in Beaconsfield to-day of the actual mansion and its surroundings are that long, grassy mound, and one old cedar tree, with its far-stretching, shade-giving branches—light above and dark beneath—under which Burke is traditionally believed to have sat and written.

The tragedy which eclipsed the light and life of Edmund Burke on the threshold of the repose which he had so well earned is now famous. *The Farington Diary* has shed new light on it, and has given us another instance of the fact that grief, even more than ambition, is the true "last infirmity of noble mind."

Edmund Burke was sixty-five years of age when, at the close of the Warren Hastings trial, he deliberately retired from Parliament. He had long contemplated that step. But it had always been part of his scheme that Richard, the darling of his heart and the apple of his eye, his only son, should succeed him. Richard Burke was nominated by Lord Fitzwilliam for the seat which his father vacated at Malton, in Yorkshire; and after a sharp struggle, Richard won the seat.

But the effort seems to have been too great for a weakly constitution. For at the end of the election Richard was seized with a sharp illness. He was removed to Brompton; and there he died.

On September 30th, 1794, Lady Inchiquin, a niece of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and before her marriage a ward of Burke's, gave Farington a remarkable description of Richard Burke's death and of Edmund Burke's unrestrained grief. If Lady Inchiquin was

well informed, Edmund Burke's lack of due restraint was one of the causes of his son's death.

"On that day he died he heard his father so loud in his expression of grief in the next room, as himself to be much moved by it. He ordered his servant to dress him and make him appear as well as he could. He then walked into the next room to his Father and addressed him on allowing his grief so to overcome him. 'You unman me, Sir, by it—recollect yourself—come into me, and talk to me of religion, or on some other subject.' They returned together, and, being seated, the young man said, My Heart 'flutters.' Hearing a noise like rain he said 'Does it rain?' His father replied, 'No, it is the wind.' Again hearing it, he said, 'Surely it is rain.' 'No,' said the father, 'it is the wind among the trees.' The Son then began to repeat that part of the morning hymn from Milton (*Paradise Lost*, Book V), beginning with :

" 'His praise,' ye winds ! that from four quarters blow,
Breathe soft or loud : and wave your tops, ye pines !
With ev'ry plant, in sign of worship wave.
Fountains ! and ye that warble, as ye flow,
Melodious murmurs ! Warbling tune his praise."

"While proceeding in repeating that hymn, he sunk forward into his father's arms and expired. Mrs. Burke came in at this distressing moment."

Edmund Burke, according to the stories of the time, learnt nothing by this tragic event. Having killed his son, he proceeded to kill himself. Here is another piece of Farington's gossip, perhaps less reliable than that of Lady Inchiquin—

"Marchi (assistant to Sir Joshua Reynolds) said the grief of Burke on the loss of his son was excessive. He cd. not be kept from the room in which the corpse lay, and after viewing threw himself on the bed in agonies, and was so weakened by his grief He could scarcely stand. Burke's servants thought the journey and the business of the election had hastened his end. He had sicknesses in the night

which he desired his servant to conceal from his Father. He was 36 years old."

The effect of this calamity on Burke's temperament was disastrous. He did not merely, like Horatio after the death of Hamlet, vow to absent himself "from felicity awhile": he vowed himself to death. His famous threnody expresses this resolve in words of sombre splendour:

"The storm has gone over me, and I lie like one of those old oaks which the late hurricane has scattered about me. I am stripped of all my honour: I am torn up by the roots, and lie prostrate on the earth. . . . I am alone. I have no one to meet my enemies in the gate. I live in an inverted order. They who ought to have succeeded me have gone before me. They who should have been to me as posterity, are in the place of ancestors."

There is a nobler touch in the lament of the great Tennyson when struck by the same calamity:

"To question why
The sons before the fathers die,
Not mine! And I may meet him soon,"¹

Burke cherished no such consoling thought.

The peerage of Beaconsfield had been offered to Burke. He now refused it. He took a pension of £2,500 a year. But he took it bitterly: and the party storms that broke around that pension did nothing to sweeten the gift.

He determined to die. All his letters are full of it. Writing to his friend, Dr. Hussy, in December, 1796, he says:

"I cannot conceal from you that I am not long for this world. I never could have less reason for regret in quitting the world than at this moment."

Everything was going awry. The war against revolutionary France had been his special desire.

¹ "To the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava."

It had lasted four years ; and hitherto it had been a failure. All the world desired peace. Burke did his best to prolong war. *The Letters on a Regicide Peace*, full of genius as they are, stand for all time as the ferocious expression of the hatreds of an old, embittered man.

In January, 1797, Burke wrote to William Wyndham a letter showing that he was steadily going downhill. Wyndham had urged him to go to Bath. Burke replied :

"The very idea of going to Bath at a full season, when I cannot take a glass of water but in a crowd, frightens me so much that the crowd would do me more harm than the waters would do me good."

Wyndham replied with a letter which is a model of true friendship :

"You must really, my dear sir, come fairly to the point of deciding, in the first instance, whether you wish to recover. If life is really become so insipid or painful that you are really impetuous for the score to close, then indeed there is no room for further discussion."

But that was the truth. Burke was impatient "for the score to close." His temper, never very good, became worse. He grew more self-centred. Again the *Inchiquins* handed on to Farington some of the gossip of the Burke household at Beaconsfield :

"In his house Burke is quiet if not contradicted in anything : but walks about it heedless of every concern—knowing nothing of servants—expences—etc., etc. He is very careless of his papers—would drop on the floor a paper though it contained treason as He would do a newspaper cover. Mrs. Burke watches over everything—collects his scraps, arranges and docketts every paper. My dear Jane, will Burke say, I want such a paper,—it is produced—as conversation proceeds he will call for others. She produces them—He asks sometimes for one which she cannot remem-

ber. Yes, Yes, Yes, My dear Jane—no contradiction, it must be found, she examines."

We must not believe all we read in diaries. But it is clear that Burke was suffering from that fatal malady of having lost interest in the world. He had lost the "will to live."

He died at the age of sixty-eight, on July 9th, 1797.

There was no sign of disease. Here Farington is on surer ground:

"Malone was at the funeral of Burke. The body was not opened. He died of an Atrophy and suffered little pain—He had spit blood and wasted away. Dr. Lawrence only was at Beaconsfield at the time of his death. He was sensible to the last—and was read to three hours before his death, saw His end approaching 3 days before."

So died the great Edmund Burke—of a broken heart, if ever man so died.

The total disappearance of Burke's beloved mansion seems typical of his life. No single structure of law or polity stands to mark his memory. He was never even the humblest of Cabinet Ministers. The post of Paymaster-General was agreed by all parties to be the highest Ministerial post fitted for the greatest brain of his age. That mighty champion of ideas was not considered to be fit to run a first-class Department.

There was in this, no doubt, some element of that eighteenth-century snobbery—encouraged by Burke himself—which regarded the administration of the country as the prerogative of the aristocracy. There was also the rooted English idea that a man of ideas cannot become a man of affairs. But we must so far trust his contemporaries as to believe that there was in Burke some element of disturbing passion which made it difficult for him to work with others, or to be responsible for great trusts.

The strange history of Burke's relationship to this

very house of "Gregories" was perhaps, in itself, a warning to his colleagues and friends in that great Whig Party which Burke so long supplied with ideas.

Farington records in his diary that Burke purchased Beaconsfield for £17,000 with money gained in India Stock speculations. The statement seems to have been made to him by Malone after his return from Burke's funeral, where he probably heard it from Burke's relations and friends.

If that be truth, it throws considerable light on one of the historic mysteries of eighteenth-century history—a mystery only second to that of the authorship of the letters of Junius. How did Burke afford "Gregories"?

For, indeed, this buying of "Gregories" was, on the face of it, a very strange episode in the life of a penniless scribe and secretary. Up to the time of his purchase Burke had been living in lodgings and small London houses. Then one day he takes a trip out of London, sees a big country house that strikes his fancy, and comes back the owner.

Many ingenious conjectures have been poured out by the curious and inquisitive. William Burke has been suggested—that mysterious kinsman of the great Edmund who dogged his footsteps throughout life. Then the Marquis of Rockingham has been brought on the stage: the peer who later on, at any rate, often made big loans to a useful political ally who could supply him with what he did not possess himself—brains and eloquence. India Stock always haunted the scene somewhere; but it seemed too strange an episode that one who was the chief champion of the Indians against the Nabobs should himself have been a Nabob by proxy.

What really happened is now clear from Farington's narrative. India was a prolific and bountiful source of wealth for England in the eighteenth

century. It occupied the place of South Africa in the late nineteenth. Just as multitudes took a deal in "Chartered," so quite ordinary Members of Parliament took a hand in "Indians." William Burke, Edmund's kinsman, was always deep in "Indians," and generally lost deeply. William handed some to his cousin. Edmund, being very simple in those matters, and probably nervous of such possessions, immediately sold. Then, gilded with this great and unaccustomed wealth, he went out and bought the thing he most desired—a home. He took a ride down to Beaconsfield—and returned to town the owner of "Gregories."

It was a fine stroke of romance. But it was a very bad stroke of business. He could buy the house; but how was he going to maintain it? It was a costly affair. For the rest of his life "Gregories" was a dragging chain on all Burke's worldly fortunes. It devoured everything that came in. It accounted for all his borrowings. It may almost be said that "Gregories" partly explains for the growing anxiety and depression that shadowed Burke's life, and helped to bring him to his grave.

The episode stands out almost alone in Burke's life. He was never a gambler: and at the height of his friendship with Fox he always left him at the door of "Brooks'." He was scrupulously incorruptible in public affairs. Like Lord Chatham before him, he refused all those emoluments of the office of Paymaster-General which had hitherto been cordially accepted by all the aristocratic politicians. "Gregories," we may say, was Burke's only "flutter."

But what a "flutter"!

A poor Irish adventurer, earning a precarious livelihood as secretary to various eminent political leaders, suddenly becomes the owner of a great country mansion. All the world wonders. Perhaps the most extraordinary tribute to Burke's integrity

of character is that, in face of this astounding event, not a single contemporary critic—not even the most cynical—connected the event with political corruption.

But every one made a note of it as a reckless and foolish act. All the great people shook their great wigs, and made a black mark against his claim to Cabinet rank.

Perhaps Burke had caught from the gambling atmosphere in which he lived—the atmosphere of Fox and Sheridan, “Brooks’ ” and the “Cocoa Tree ”—some element of speculative daring which slightly affected even that steady, level, well-balanced mind, and led him to build on dreams.

The dream has now vanished. The structure of “Gregories ” has dissolved in the mists. It was not given to Burke, any more than to Sir Walter Scott, to found a family. How often that aim haunts the purposes and deflects the wills of our greatest British men !

We must take it that Burke, so moderate and cautious in most things, so enamoured of the middle path, had his one weak spot. He grew tired of the narrow house-room and mean lodgings which are the appointed portion of so many men of his calling. Why should literature—so, perhaps, he thought—be so meanly housed ? Why should the Muses always live in Grub Street ? Why should all those beautiful houses and gardens which are the stored glory of England be enjoyed only by the rich and well-born ? For once, at whatever cost, let the Mansion fit the Man !

So Burke “plunged.” For once in his life he threw all prudence and discretion to the winds. The Irish element in his character broke loose. He saw the house—and coveted it. Coveting is already, in the case of a man like Burke, half-way to possession.

There is no sign that Burke ever repented of the purchase. He bore with a stolid stoicism all the

embarrassments that followed. Having once begun, he went on borrowing. He acquired the habit, common in that generation, of regarding debts as the honourable gilding of a political career. He had no false pride in the matter. He was willing to have them paid off by any fortunate and enlightened possessor of larger means than himself: just as Lord Beaconsfield, the neighbour to his fame, was willing to allow a series of kindly ladies to keep him afloat. Why not? As Harold Skimpole might put it, it is surely a grudging and churlish spirit that denies to the rich the joy of wise giving!

There was perhaps a worldly element in Burke's calculations. He found himself a despised colleague among men who owned great houses and great estates. Even Rockingham had been warned against him as a Papist and an Irish adventurer. Chatham had treated him with contempt—a contempt which Burke never forgave or forgot. Now, Burke was an intensely proud man. He held a great Irish name, and belonged to that professional Irish class of the eighteenth century which held its head high, and formed the core of a great and brilliant society in Dublin. There is no sign that his wife, the daughter of a small English doctor, was moved by social ambitions. Probably Burke himself was too proud to feel in that way. Irishmen do not share the social ambitions of Englishmen: they confer, and do not elicit, social favours. Being the sons of kings, how can they aspire any higher?

But though social ambition had no spell over him, political ambition swayed him. The owner of "Gregories" at Beaconsfield could figure as something among those proud Whig Lords. He was no longer a "son of the earth." He had left Fleet Street behind for ever, and could not foresee the time when that street, too, would be the home of Barons. So he took the mansion.

Of course Burke was wrong. The owners of great palaces like Stowe and Blenheim were not going to be influenced by the fact that Burke lived in a house like "Gregories" at Beaconsfield. It were better to talk to them, as Dr. Johnson always did, straight from a court in Fleet Street: kings of another empire, the empire of the mind. To challenge them on the scale of acreage was to provoke comparison and contrast; and thus Burke's claim became actually weaker than the claim of Gough's Court. "Gregories" made no real difference to Burke's standing. After "Gregories," as before, he was still only Paymaster-General—the most unsuitable post conceivable for a mind so rich and rare. He was destined all his life to remain outside the baize door.

He troubled little about that. As these gewgaws failed, and the years passed, Burke found his true position in the State. He rose gradually to a position where "promotion" has no power, and influence does not count. He became supreme in the sphere of ideas. He moulded and dominated parties from the pulpit of the soul. He found counsel—as Chatham so finely said of Cromwell—in "the cabinet of his own sagacious mind." The history of Burke's life became the history of certain ideas, propounded and advocated with all the glowing arts of the orator and the pamphleteer. Freedom in America and the Colonies—Humanity in India—Justice and Order in Europe—such, in the broadest sense, were those master-ideas; and they became the guiding stars of that impetuous life. Ideas with Burke were realities—they were conquering passions.

Thus his mansion perished—but his real life-work survived. The things that did not perish with him were his immortal style, his unquenchable ardour, his unstained purity of heart and mind. Burke required no palace for these to inhabit; no monument

more lasting than brass; no wealth to gild them, no public departments to administer them. Here was required, not a palace; if any mansion, a mansion not to be built with hands. For those things were the vapour of his soul—the effluence of his spirit. They are to-day the most vital things in our prose literature—ineffably enshrined.

After all, not only "Gregories," but the whole life of Burke is a great and wonderful romance.

Here was a needy Irish boy, son of a Protestant Dublin attorney and a Catholic Irish mother, who came to London to seek his fortune. He gained no high position in pure literature, in spite of Goldsmith's famous distich:

"Who, born for the Universe, narrowed his mind
And to Party gave up what was meant for Mankind."

As an essayist and thinker—in spite of that remarkable youthful essay "On the Sublime and Beautiful"¹—Burke would never have shone among our immortals. His genius was essentially social and political; and although also a good writer and conversationalist—an accepted member of the Johnson Club—he was always an orator.

Such a genius requires a setting. It needs "listening Senates to command." The career requires the opportunity.

That opportunity came to Burke by a series of small chances that led him to the House of Commons—the service to "Single Speech Hamilton"—the secretaryship to Rockingham—the close borough given to him by the Whigs in need of brains. He began by being the mercenary of the Whigs. He ended by being their master.

There have been many men who have begun thus, and have ended by becoming Tapers or Tadpoles. Men who feed out of the hand become tamed to

¹ Written in 1756.

obey the voice of the charmer. The true distinguishing mark of men like Burke and Gladstone—who both had the same political beginnings—is that they know where service ends and servitude begins. They use the ladder, but they can also climb with their own hands. They are willing to take risks as the price of independence.

So it was with Burke. He cut loose from "Single-speech Hamilton" when that strong personality attempted to brand him with his own iron. He threw over the Whigs when they tried, under Fox, to become champions of the French Revolution. In that famous and terrible quarrel, Burke showed once and for all that no personal considerations of friendship affected him one whit when public interests were concerned.

For politics formed Burke's supreme passion: the good of the State was the star to which he hitched his wagon; and that star was only a planet in the solar system of which Humanity was the central sun.

Who to-day remembers Hamilton? Who remembers Rockingham? Who forgets Burke? The servant has become greater than all his lords. This man of ideas has eclipsed all the men of action. The Assistant Secretary, the Paymaster-General, has outshone all those gentlemen in the full-bottomed wigs, the ermined robes, and the blue ribands. When Rockingham took into the bosom of that stolid old Whig Party that wild Irishman Burke, he took an explosive and a diffusive force. He enfolded an earthquake.

It is curious to reflect that perhaps if those Ministers had given Burke high office, and admitted him into their own ranks, he might have ranged himself with them. The discipline of action, the plane of compromise, might have taken off all the corners and edges, and shaped Burke to their pur-

poses. He might have become just another British Prime Minister in the long succession since the days of Walpole.

As it was, Burke kept his independence. They left him his precarious freedom. He held the liberty of the unbought man. He remained "captain of his soul." He became the latest in that long line of fearless men—the Hampdens, the Vanes, the Brights—who have advised England without fee.

But by his great genius as a writer and speaker Burke became something more. He ceased to belong to England, and became a man of all time and all continents. He is as powerful to-day on the banks of the Ganges as on the banks of the Thames. He is a mighty force on the banks of the Potomac. What his own times lost by his limitations, other times have since gained; ever since, through the slow decades, the world has been gleaning the full harvest of his splendid powers. He worked for eternity. What his contemporaries lost, we have gained.

I return to the shade of that mansion at Beaconsfield. Here we have the human Burke, seeking a happy habitation, craving for a place of peace and rest from his labours. It is the deepest passion of all great combative men. They need an ingle-nook. They long for a harbour from the storms of the open sea. The greater the hurricane, the deeper the longing for rest.

"Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!"

After all his wanderings in the sublime, his songs "at heaven's gate"—his aspirations after a nobler life for mankind, Edmund Burke needed just this simple thing—a lodging in the wild: a place where to lay his head. To achieve that he dared everything. He mortgaged his future—he spent reck-

lessly. He borrowed without shame. All for a home! Not, as others do, for some wild pleasures and extravagances; but just to gain a "haunt of ancient peace," to which he could retire amid the stresses of his feverish life. That was his great gamble!

Silence now reigns where he lived. That grassy mound is all that is left, like the tomb of all that hope and life. He spent what Fate had given him of genius, and then the grave closed on him and his. The son, like that other Richard, the son of Oliver Cromwell, was not fit to succeed the father.

Richard died, like a moth that has gone too near the light. His father perhaps felt some deep remorse for the fashion of his going. So the direct line died out, and the star of Burke set.

Perhaps it is better so. With all our passion for families and successions, it is as well to be made to realize sometimes that genius is something personal and individual, something that flashes out and then dies down; something that is beyond all breeding or planning; something mysterious and ungovernable. Genius is like the wind—it "bloweth where it listeth." Burke's fame has not struggled on through inferior successors. His light has not flickered out through a line of farthing dips; it blazed out for a time, and then went out, leaving us a perfect memory.

As we stand on the mound and think of that mansion, and the man who inhabited it, there seems almost as if there was something splendid in the refusal of the mansion to survive the man. The mound becomes a tomb, a tumulus of ancient splendour. The spirit of Burke's genius breathes in this lonely spot without rivalry from Home or Successor.

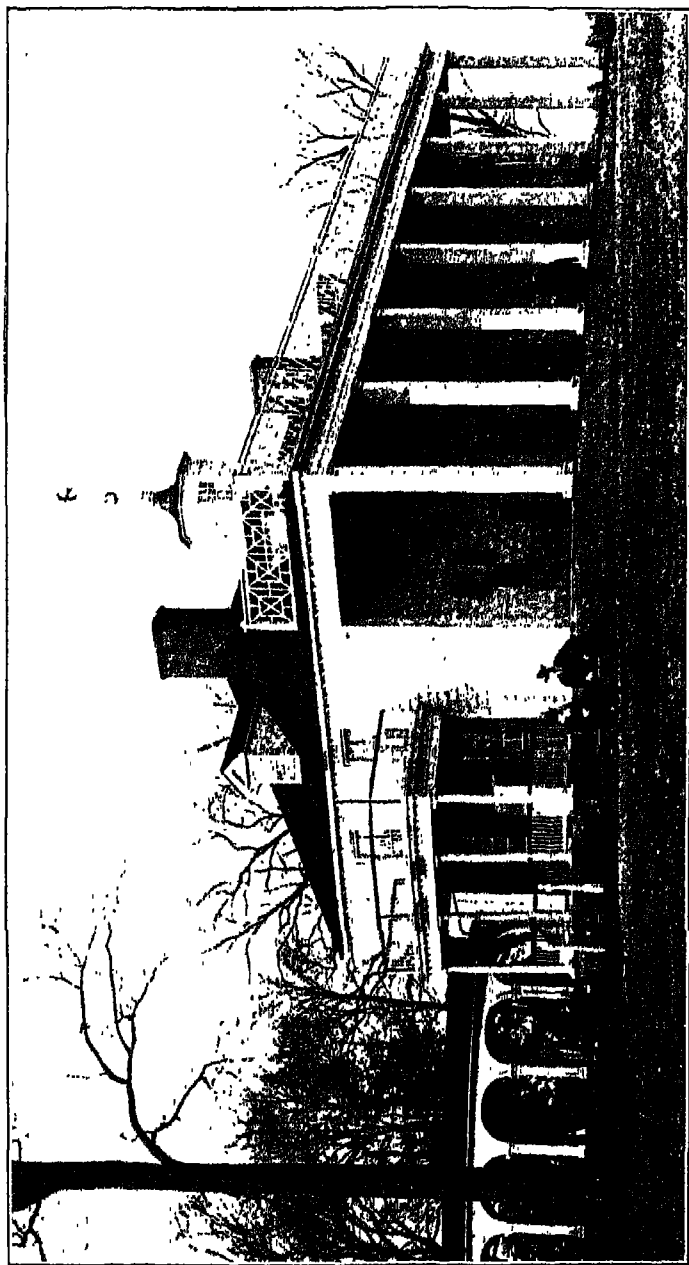
Burke stands alone.

XIII

Washington and Mount Vernon

"O thou, that sendest out the man
To rule by land and sea,
Strong mother of a Lion-line,
Be proud of those strong sons of thine
Who wrench'd their rights from thee!"

England and America (in 1782): TENNYSON.



Topical Press Agency.

MOUNT VERNON: from the River Potomac.

XIII

Washington and Mount Vernon

ON a golden day, when already the American autumn had laid "her fiery finger on the leaves," we dropped down the great Potomac river in the President's yacht *Mayflower*. She was taking us from her mooring-place at Washington City to visit the famous and sacred home of the founder of the United States. It was a tranquil and beautiful voyage on the bosom of that mighty stream, flowing so softly through the mid-American landscape.

It is a journey of singular peacefulness. There are no towns and few houses along the stretch of some twenty miles that lies between George Washington's home and the city to which he gave his name. We could imagine ourselves back in those early colonial days when Washington's forbears, looking far ahead, carved mighty estates out of the shores of that river, and laid the foundations of the great wealth which he enjoyed.

No wonder that Washington loved this country and the peace of it—that his heart always yearned towards it in the midst of bitter war, and that he always came back to it in the intervals of his cruel labours. "My heart untravelled fondly turns to thee," he might have cried, in the words of the poet who, far away in England, at that very time was lisping songs of peace while Washington was dealing out the thunderbolts of war.

George Washington's estate, as we all know, lay in the close neighbourhood of the property of Lord Fairfax, and there are few things more dramatic in American history than the great friendship which sprang up between those neighbours, the close intimacy of those two men, so rudely shattered by the stress of war. Fairfax took the English side, and Virginia knew him no more. His house lay desolate for many years, until in the war of 1812—so the story runs—it was destroyed by a shell from an English cruiser passing up the river for the attack on Washington City. By a strange, ironical chance the British officer mistook Fairfax's house for Washington's. He destroyed the loyalist mansion while leaving the home of the rebel untouched. So, by that strange chance, Mount Vernon survives to-day.

As we approached the bend of the river at the angle of which stands the house, the sailors of the President's yacht lined up on deck and stood at the salute. The ship moved at half speed, while every one on board, both American and English, fell into a strange, respectful silence. It was as if we were approaching one of the sacred spots on this planet Earth, one of the central shrines of human energy and heroism. The band struck up "The Star-spangled Banner" as we gradually neared the shore. The flutes wailed—a solemn silence fell. It was as if nature and humanity joined in one common hush of memory and reverence.

From the landing-stage we climbed up a broad path between splendid woods to the cave-like grave of George Washington. There we paid our dues of respect and regard; and then we mounted the rest of the path to the plateau on which the house stands.

George Washington possessed many tastes akin to the great squires of England. One was his

passion for vistas. So behind this house at Mount Vernon he cut a broad avenue through the trees. Thus you gain a fine view of the house as you reach the plateau. It is a very simple, two-storied colonial residence, with no pretence of grandeur or magnificence—no claim to be a palace.

It is essentially a home. Behind it are the white outhouses, so strangely like stables, set apart for the slaves in the old colonial life.

Washington, we are told, looked after his slaves himself, and we have every reason to suppose that he was a merciful and humane master. But it is a measure of the unbridgeable gulf between freedom and slavery that so great a man should have considered such buildings as these—mere hutments—fit for human beings!

Not that Washington was ever happy about American slavery. He spoke some curious prophetic words a year before he died.

"I wish," he wrote in a letter to his friend Lawrence Lewis, "from my soul that the legislature of this State could see the policy of a gradual abolition of slavery. It might prevent much future mischief."

A few years before writing that letter Washington had vowed never to purchase another slave, and he looked forward to the time when the whole system could be abolished. He had intended to free his slaves himself. But he found that he was tied by some laws of property. Still, they are there, those outhouses: a glaring piece of evidence against the social habits of George Washington's day.

We now entered the pillared mansion itself. For, like all the houses of this colonial period, Mount Vernon is surrounded with pillared verandahs. We passed eagerly through the rooms consecrated by that great life—the stately, dignified, eighteenth-

century dining-room; the sitting-rooms where he spent his evenings: rooms restful and elegant, filled with that beautiful Georgian furniture which was the delight of that age. The whole domestic life of the man seemed to come back to us. It seemed very British.

Then we mounted the stairs to the little bedroom where he breathed his last.

"I am dying, sir," he said to his doctor. "But I am not afraid to die."

He had lived a soldier's life up to his last hour.

On the day before, while riding about the estate, as was his daily habit, he had caught a chill. But that did not send him to bed.

He wrote in his library until twelve o'clock that night.

As he mounted to his wife's room she gently rebuked him for being so late.

"I came as soon as my business was accomplished," he said. "You know well that through a long life it has been my unvaried rule never to put off till to-morrow the duties which we should perform to-day."

That was Washington all over—steady, sententious, well regulated to the last.

In that spirit George Washington had lived his life for sixty-seven years. In that spirit he died.

When death came, he met it without a tremor, and now he lies in his grave close to his beloved house, to which he gave the passion of a lifetime.

There seems a solemn presence in this house. That presence looks down from the walls in many presentments—from Gilbert Stuart's canvas, many fine engravings, and, above all, a bust taken shortly before his death—a bust which, more than all the pictures, in its dignity and quiet reposeful-

ness, gives a just idea of that splendour which was Washington.

But it is not any picture or bust that makes you feel that presence.

The presence is in the very walls and the furniture; the verandah that looks out towards the south across the expanse of river and towards the radiance of the sun; in the great, brooding trees that back the house and shelter it—those trees which he himself planted, and which now seem to stand, like mourning sentinels, round his grave.

Crowding memories throng—memories of those long seven years of bitter war—of Valley Forge—of all the letters that he wrote to his beloved home and family.

He wrote regularly. In the midst of war, he never forgot peace. He sent every week to his wife full instructions as to every detail of his house—even down to the very food and drink of the servants, and all those little trifles of a sweet home life.

Amid the violence of war his heart always leaned to the gentle household scenes, like the heart of the Happy Warrior:

“ He who, though thus endued as with a sense
And faculty for storm and turbulence,
Is yet a Soul whose master-bias leans
To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes.”

For the vision of that home never passed from the mind of George Washington, whether in victory or defeat, in the palace or by the camp-fire, in the heat of the summers or the bitter cold of the winters, with his soldiers dying around him. He was away from this home without a single “leave” for seven long years. But he never forgot a single detail.

It was certainly not that Washington found here a soft spot. Mount Vernon never weakened Wash-

ington. It was rather that he found here the image of all that he was fighting for—happy, free homes—unsullied domestic peace. He was

“More brave for this that he hath much to love.”

The proof of this is that Washington never hesitated to leave Mount Vernon at the call of duty.

He left his house first to wage the wars of Britain against the Red Indian and the French.

Then, returning, he enjoyed at Mount Vernon a long period of repose—from 1759 to 1773—fourteen years. Then he left his home again to place his sword without fee or reward at the service of the American colonists in their just quarrel with the home country.

He returned after those seven years with peace and victory on his banners. He sought no reward except this return.

Again he spent several tranquil years—1781-9—seven in all.

But he did not hesitate to leave the peace of home once more when his country called him to the high office of its Presidency over the Independent States which he had brought into being.

He had watched over them in their cradle. He could not refuse to shield them in their childhood.

A traveller who visited Mount Vernon in 1785 gives us a deeply interesting picture of Washington in his home during the interval between the War of Independence and the call to the Presidency :

“I found him kind and benignant in the domestic circle ; revered, and beloved by all around him ; agreeably social without ostentation, delighting in anecdote and adventures, without assumption ; his domestic arrangements harmonious and systematic. His servants seemed to watch his eye and to anticipate his every wish. Hence a look was equivalent to a command.”

Another picture comes to us from a bishop who

was among the many visitors to Mount Vernon in those years. This bishop is a witness to that prevailing feature of George Washington—his entire absence of self-consciousness :

"If a stranger to his presence were present, he would never have known from anything said that he was conscious of having distinguished himself in the eye of the world."

His own ward, Miss Custis, granddaughter of the lady he married, gives convincing testimony to his habit of silence :

"He was a silent, thoughtful man. He spoke little generally : never of himself. I never heard him relate a single act of his life during the war. I have often seen him perfectly abstracted, his lips moving, but no sound was perceptible."

This pen-picture of Washington is singularly like the picture of General Botha given to me by one of his family some years after the Boer War. He had the same aversion from referring to the events of the terrible heart-tearing struggle through which he had passed ; and he rarely, except to intimate friends, described the incidents of that fearful conflict.

George Washington has suffered much from being pictured as a "plaster saint." Hero-worship is strong in America, especially after the hero is dead. The early *Lives* of Washington depicted a person of impossible perfection, repulsive to all healthy vision.

The result was a reaction against this stained-window vista.

Irving was the first biographer to turn the tide. But even his very full *Life* failed to give a really living picture of this very human man. He failed also to pick out that feature of George Washington which gave him his real and unique claim to greatness.

That feature was that he, a mighty man of war, was also a lover of peace.

Whence did he, a colonial pioneer, draw this ardour for tranquillity?

How was it that, after all his wars, his sole master-passion was to return to this peaceful home at Mount Vernon and live the life of a country squire?

SULGRAVE MANOR AND THE WASHINGTONS

To answer that question fully, we must recross the Atlantic and visit another mansion—the English home of the Washington family.

In the north-east corner of Northamptonshire, almost in the very centre of England, lies the little village of Sulgrave.

It is a deserted corner of England—so deserted and neglected for many generations that the parish church is even now to be approached only through a tangle of weeds and nettles. The village itself wears a garment of sleepy indifference.

But of late years there has been an awakening. For at the northern end of the village there stands a grey old house, with gables and dormer windows, with queer corners and antique doors, which has suddenly become the centre of a historic revival.

That house is named "Sulgrave Manor." It was the ancestral home of the Washingtons before that family left the English country-side and prepared itself for its flight from England.

Sulgrave Manor had been standing in neglect for at least a century, oblivious of its past, submitted to all ignoble use—almost as shabby and uncared for as the tombs in the parish church or the pew where the family sat.

Visiting Sulgrave in 1855, Washington Irving found the house inhabited by a farmer.

A part only of the manor-house remained, according to his description, but he records that there was

a coloured glass window in a chamber used as the buttery of the farm, and on that window he saw the Washington arms emblazoned.¹

Hard by, Irving found a rookery, and he noticed that the rooks were still hovering and cawing about their hereditary nest.

The coloured window and the rookery have both gone. But the house remains, and thanks to the energies of the Sulgrave Institute, and the beneficence of certain donors—especially Sir Charles Wakefield—it has to-day recovered some of the delicate charm and beauty of an Elizabethan manor-house.

The little manor-house stands to-day amid its green meadows and gardens, preserved by these new, kindly foster-parents as part and parcel of this historic heritage. The rooms within have been carefully restored and cleared, and are now being used as the treasure-house of a collection of Washington prints and relics, including a title-deed of some land, signed by one of the sons of the original owner of Sulgrave Manor—Lawrence Washington.

This document contains the earliest imprint of the Washington arms—two stripes and two stars. They are now believed to be the original source of the national standard of the United States, with its forty-eight stars and thirteen stripes.

Those arms of Washington are also engraved in stone over one of the doors. The house is now adorned within with very beautiful old sixteenth-century furniture—tables, chairs, beds—all of which tend to revive the illusion of the old English home of the Washingtons.

How Washington Irving would have rejoiced to have seen this day!

Behind the manor-house is an old garden and a terraced walk, shaded by lofty trees. Not long

¹ *Life of George Washington*, Washington Irving (1855-9).

ago, under those trees there assembled a little crowd of English and visiting Americans to celebrate the dedication of Sulgrave Manor. It was just an assembly of the English folk beneath the village trees. They met that day, as they used to meet three centuries ago ; and probably the Americans on that notable day of the twentieth century spoke a form of the English language more nearly akin than ours to the English of the sixteenth century. The fact of our common ancestry came very vividly home to us.

This common ancestry haunts one all the time in this little village of Sulgrave. For as one strolls from the manor-house along the village street along to the parish church, one is treading in the footsteps of that old Washington family. We are walking along the path that they followed when they attended worship on Sunday morning.

In those days—the days of the wilful Elizabeth—the man who kept away from his church did so at peril to his life and property. Nor can there be any doubt that the Washingtons regularly attended. For there, in the church—in the right-hand corner of the northern aisle—as you approach the chancel, is the spot once occupied by the panelled door and sides of the Washington pew—now once more set back in its old place by the munificence of Sulgrave's best friend.

There is no doubt of the spot. For just south of the pew, on the flagstones, are traces of the Washington brasses, placed there far back in the sixteenth century over the grave of Lawrence Washington and his wife, who had been the wealthy and respected owners of the manor-house.

Washington Irving saw there in 1855 the effigies of "Lawrence Washington, Gent: and Amee, his wife," together with their four sons and seven daughters beneath them. To-day the brasses have

been wrenched away by some vandals, and all you can see is a headless Lawrence.

A kind donor has offered to replace the brasses and restore the inscription. But it can easily be deciphered to-day.

"Here lyeth buried y^e bodys of Laurence Wassinght^e Gent. and Amee his wyf by whome he had issue iiii sons and vii daught's WcLaurence dyed ye day of an^o 15 and Amee decessed the vi day of October an^o dñi 1564."

Beneath the inscription is a shield much defaced, with little effigies of the four sons and seven daughters—all in a row! The father's effigy is above that of the sons, and the mother's over the daughters, as was usual in those sixteenth-century brasses.

There is a great gap of time between the Lawrence Washingtons of Sulgrave and the Lawrence Washingtons of Virginia, who are first heard of in 1658—more than a century later. But careful and loving research has revealed the main outlines of the descent. It is now known that shortly after the death of the Lawrence Washington of the Northamptonshire manor-house the family failed financially, owing to speculations in wool—a common risk of that period. Perhaps, too, they lived too finely in that manor-house, and were rather too proud of their estate.

At any rate, Lawrence's son Robert sold the manor-house: and thereafter Robert's son Lawrence left Sulgrave for good and purchased a cottage, in the village of Little Brington, at a distance of some eight miles from Sulgrave. There he lived for some time. Over the door of that cottage he inscribed the fitting inscription, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away." It is there to this day—almost at the very gates of the palace of Althorp.

Then the Washingtons moved southwards.

Robert's grandson, another Lawrence, became Rector of Purleigh, in Essex, and took the Royalist side in the civil wars. It was probably for that reason—and because several eminent men of the family fought on the side of the King—that the two sons of the Rector of Purleigh decided to emigrate to Virginia in 1657. Irving mixes up the Essex ancestry with the Washingtons of Kent; and he attributes the emigration of the sons of the Parson Lawrence to a flight from the vengeance of Cromwell. That seems romance rather than history. But it is still a very curious and interesting fact that these Washingtons—the ancestors of the great Republican—emigrated from England solely because they were too loyal to the English king.

The Washingtons of the New World all through adhered to the Episcopal Church, and until the time of the War of Independence showed no symptom of rebellion against that creed of kings. They were just typical English colonels.

There was as yet no rebel blood in the Washington stock on the British side of the Atlantic.

Thus some four generations passed between the Lawrence Washingtons of Sulgrave Manor and the Lawrence Washingtons of Virginia.

Another two generations were to pass before the family reached its flower in the great man who founded the United States.

Lawrences, Johns and Roberts, they pass in procession before our eyes through those centuries: they flicker into life and shine with an unsteady light for a few brief years, and then they go out again into the darkness. One Washington succeeds another. Men and women take up the task and hand on the torch. Each generation seems to be labouring at very little beyond their own narrow

corner : husbanding little beyond their own slender store.

It all seems a trivial, insignificant round.

“What is it all but a trouble of ants in the gleam of a million million of suns?”

But suddenly the call comes, and all those generations of labour find their meaning. That stored and husbanded energy, so long and laboriously gathered, suddenly bursts into the blaze of one wonderful human genius. That genius is the flower of all that long and slow growth—the one magic and enduring result. It is for that they have lived and died. It is that which gives the meaning we had missed.

Just so all those obscure Washingtons found their full fruition in the great George.

It is a mystery beyond all human science—this coming of the great men. They flash on the world unannounced. Sometimes they come even when they are not wanted, and become great leaders of confusion.

Sometimes they are wanted, and they do not come. Whole nations fail and fade for the want of them.

But sometimes, most wonderfully, the hour and the man come together.

That was what happened with George Washington and the American Revolution. He was just a marvellous piece of good luck for America. America was just a foster-land for him: the very stage and platform that he required for his opportunity.

Can we wonder if the attitude of America towards his memory is one not far removed from worship? If the Romans worshipped their emperors, can we be astonished that America—even the America of “Big Business”—visits Mount Vernon with bowed

head and hat removed? That she stills her voices in the presence of that memory?

America goes to Mount Vernon as to a shrine. In some such spirit we also, even we English, ought to go to Sulgrave Manor.

For in fighting the battles of freedom in America, did not George Washington also fight the battles of the true England?

[NOTE.—Sulgrave Manor was bought in 1913 by the British Peace Centenary Committee as a joint memorial to the century of peace between the two countries, and was dedicated as a House of Peace in 1921. It is now maintained by the Sulgrave Institution: and is a popular place of pilgrimage for American visitors.

Mount Vernon was purchased for the nation from the Washington family in 1859 by a combination of patriotic Americans led by a Carolina woman, Ann Pamela Cunningham. It is now controlled by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union.]

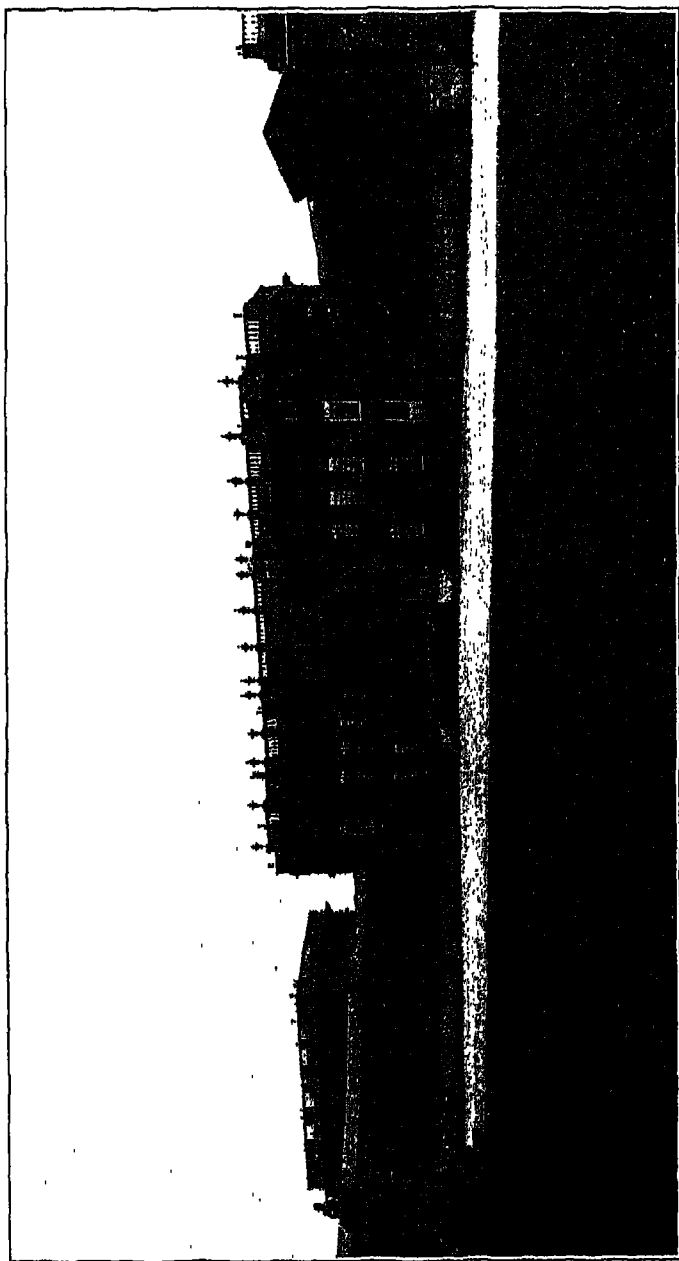
XIV

The Grenvilles and Stowe House

" Full of long-sounding corridors it was,
That over-vaulted grateful gloom,
Through which the live-long day my soul did pass,
Well-pleased, from room to room.

" Full of great rooms and small the palace stood,
All various, each a perfect whole
From living Nature, fit for every mood
And change of my still soul."

The Palace of Art: TENNYSON.



Photograph by R. and H. Chapman.

STOWE HOUSE : The North Front.

XIV

The Grenvilles and Stowe House

JUST north of the pretty little town of Buckingham, itself the chief star in the constellation of little towns which makes Buckinghamshire so noble a county, there stands the great house of Stowe.

You approach it from Buckingham up a long avenue, between stately trees, and you feel its majesty from afar. For Stowe is practically a palace.

The great breadth of its stately front ; the immense extent of its parks ; the variety and beauty of its bridges, temples, groves and columns ; the rich interest of its storied past ; all place Stowe in a position of unique glory among our greatest English homes.

It is an English Versailles—now hoping to become a second Eton.

Yet Stowe to-day is but a shadow of what once was. Throughout the whole of last century it was gradually stripped, bough by bough and leaf by leaf, of its storied treasures ; its golden store of art collected by the Grenvilles was scattered through two continents ; its walls left naked and lifeless—

“ Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.”

Only from cold lists and auction catalogues ¹ can

¹ The Stowe Catalogue (1848), Christie's Supplementary Catalogues (October 3rd of the same year) ; also a very interesting *Description of the House and Gardens of Stowe* (1832) kindly lent to me by Mr. E. Montauban.

we now dimly surmise the glory of those great halls and passages when they glowed with pictures which were prizes from all the world of art ; with statues, plate and china culled from furthest East and West ; with carpets and tapestry which wrapped those austere walls and floors in warm garments of radiant colour.

Nor can we now easily recall in fancy the full splendour of the Stowe gardens. The shells and fragments of the old temples and memorials ; the neglected ponds and lakes ;—all these are but shadows of those splendours which drew the envious gaze and rumour of the world. The parks and spaces are still scattered with these quaint emblems of piety and affection—Lord Cobham's pillar, Lord Chatham's urn, Captain Grenville's monument ; and those embowered temples to Virtue, Concord and Venus, and other pagan deities which, in that marvellous century, almost stood for some mystical revival of Julian's great apostasy.

All the glories of that strange, fanciful, belated return to Paganism have crumbled and mouldered. But the house still stands untouched. The mighty park still remains free and open.

Nor are we left in darkness as to the past of Stowe. The letters and diaries of the eighteenth century enable us to form a very vivid picture.

That famous man of taste, Mr. Augustus Hervey—for instance—visited Stowe in October, 1765, and left a pen-picture of its glories in the supreme moment of its splendid elegance and hospitality :

“ I was four days at Stowe.

“ I left my Lord and Lady (Temple) very well yesterday in their delightful and elegant palace. What improvements ! What a delightful place ! How well he is served, with all the magnificence of a Palace, all the elegance of a real nobleman, and all the ease of a private gentleman ! I never saw so large a house so well conducted : servants

that have no *embarras*, no noise, but all attention and respect; 'tis a miracle how they have formed them so, and rubbed off the dirt and familiarity from the foreigners, and inattention and ill-breeding from the English."¹

"All the elegance of a Palace!"

It is letters such as these that make us realize what Stowe stood for in that wonderful century.

For throughout the later half of that period of Taste and Elegance—in capital letters—Stowe was the model of all that Taste and Elegance signified. It was built by one of England's greatest architects—Vanbrugh—under the guidance of one of England's peers—Cobham—in a moment of affluence; it was stored with all that art could select or wealth could purchase. Italy was scoured for its statues; Holland was put under tribute for its pictures. Vanbrugh gave up producing shady comedies in order to build shadier colonnades, and Lord Cobham consoled himself for his failure to rebuild England by his success in rebuilding Stowe.

Stowe was the one touch of romance and poetry in that hard, proud life.

Lord Temple himself—the "gawky squire"—who, with all his pride of birth, could never walk upright,—broke into rhapsody over his inheritance:

"Tell me no more of Tempe's vale,
Nor boast of Arno's flowery dale,
Taste must confess, superior still,
The charms which decorate my Hill."

The Grenvilles lost us America; but I verily believe that they thought England sufficiently compensated by gaining Stowe.

They shared those delights with a splendid generosity. Temple entertained greatly. He stinted nothing on those magnificent receptions of royalty and nobility which filled Stowe's great halls

¹ See *The Grenville Papers*, vol. iv, October 12th, 1765.

with music and revelry. Having built a splendid palace, he filled it with one unceasing flow of splendid guests.

In the *Grenville Papers* there is a very faithful description of one of these routs, written by a faithful and observant witness.¹ It is a Memorandum describing a visit of the Princess Amelia, the daughter of George II, to Stowe House in July, 1764. You see the royal party advancing in stately and splendid progress through the gardens, solemnly visiting the lakes and fairy grottos, gravely watching the fireworks ; then you observe them in the great Banquet Hall engaged in eating—eating—eating :

“ The first course consisted of twenty-one dishes, elegantly served and well arranged, a second course of twenty-seven dishes, the capital dishes in the first course twice renewed, and a well-filled side table of wholesome cheer all served on plate. Her Royal Highness ate off gold. Nothing can exceed the grandeur and order. Twelve gentlemen, well dressed, waited at table ; and twenty-four in livery waited in the next room, and in the grand hall near the dining room was a grand concert of music ; the same evening, and every evening during Her Royal Highness’ stay, the State Apartments were illuminated with 120 waxlights.”

Of course rain fell and marred the fêtes ; a pleasant reminder that, after all, in spite of Stowe, the scene was still England. But in spite of that, they supped at the Grotto :

“ At ten the gardens were illuminated with above a thousand lights, and the water before the grotto was covered with floating lights. At the further end of the canal, on the ship, which was curiously figured with lights, was a place for the music, which performed all supper-time.”

Twenty gallons of oil were burnt, and a thousand people looked on. Not bad for a remote spot in

¹ Vol. ii, p. 406. Probably by an intelligent waiting-maid.

the centre of England in the middle of the eighteenth century !

" Nothing was seen but lights and people. Nothing was felt but joy and happiness."

Such was Stowe in 1765—a sort of paradise of high-living and splendid expenditure. Here English nobility, entertaining royalty, vied with Windsor Castle.

But Stowe was not only a Paradise of Good Living—of Taste and Elegance. It was also a great political centre. It became the head-quarters of that great Grenville family, the most powerful political clan, next to the Pitts, under the Georges.

It belonged first to the Temples. Four Temple baronets owned the old English country house which preceded the palace. That stock flowered in Lord Cobham, the soldier and statesman, the " Boy Patriot " and comrade of the elder Pitt. He created the palace. He died in 1749, and left no children.

But Lord Cobham's only sister had married into a robust and masculine family which inhabited another great country house in Buckinghamshire—Wootton Hall. The Grenvilles had lived there for generations, and now the Grenvilles came to Stowe. The Grenvilles of the West had already given to England the hero of the *Revenge*, and also that staunch Cavalier who fell and was buried on Lansdown Hill. The Grenvilles of Central England were now to give England two generations of statesmen, soldiers and sailors, and among them two Prime Ministers.

Thus for half a century Stowe blazed in glory as the home of the greatest English political family, until, in reward, it became the palace of a dukedom—the dukedom of Buckingham and Chandos. Then, by a strange misfortune which seemed from generation to generation to forbid any descent in the male

line to the inheritors of Stowe, the ducal family died out.

Thus in our generation we have seen the possessions of Stowe scattered and the building itself begging for an occupier. Only to-day has it at last a prospect of a happier future.

But during the reign of the Temples and the Grenvilles, Stowe was the resort of all the greatest figures in English politics and literature—Chesterfield, Horace Walpole, Congreve, and, above all, Alexander Pope.

In a very famous poem, the fourth epistle of his *Moral Essays*—a quaint title that concealed a series of scathing satires—Pope wrote a famous attack on the building habits of his age and generation. He describes his contemporaries as covering up the beauties of nature with false pomps of stone and brick; as dying of the hurricanes invited into their houses by the destruction of trees; as exhausting their substance in tasteless magnificence.

At last—so Pope sings—these builders wearied of the very beauties which they created :

“Tired of the scene Parterres and Fountains yield,
He finds at last he better likes a field.”

Religion itself, in these houses, became a form of vanity :

“And now the Chapel’s silver bell you hear,
That summons you to all the Pride of Pray’r;
Light quirks of music, broken and uneven,
Makes the soul dance upon a jig to Heav’n.”

The dinners were a weariness to the flesh :

“Is this a dinner? this a genial room?
No, ’tis a Temple, and a hecatomb.
A solemn Sacrifice, perform’d in state,
You drink by measure, and to minutes eat.”

A sly, punning thrust—if I mistake not—at Lord Temple!

But the interesting point about this satire is that Pope, in a famous passage, excludes Stowe from his condemnation. Wishing to name a house that was a fair example of the maxim that he is laying down, Pope comes to Stowe:

"Still follow sense, of ev'ry Art the soul,
Parts answering parts shall slide into a whole,
Spontaneous beauties all around advance,
Start ev'n from Difficulty, strike from Chance;
Nature shall join you: Time shall make it grow
A Work to wonder at—perhaps a Stowe."

Did Pope mean this satirically, or was this genuine praise? It is a little doubtful. Pope enjoyed quizzing the nobility. Besides, he often mixed his praise and satire in one indistinguishable *mélange*. He always trusted to their inherited density of understanding.

But if you look over the great park at Stowe to-day you will see what Pope means. Lancelot Brown was the creator of this park, and he was a remarkable figure in eighteenth-century England.

Coming at a moment when the art of English gardening stood at its most artificial point, Brown—"Capability" Brown, as they loved to call him—first brought to us the idea that gardens should follow nature. He practically invented what we know as "landscape gardening." On those lines he laid out the gardens at Kew and Blenheim, and for many another country house throughout the land. He rose to great honour, and became the High Sheriff of an English county—thereby winning that strange and interesting prenominal of "Capability."

Brown began his art under Lord Cobham, and learned it in the park at Stowe. Here he was born and bred. It was he who schemed out the varying lines of the woods that flank the avenue which runs from Stowe House down to the Corinthian arch—the arch designed and erected by that strange and

passionate relation of Lord Chatham—Thomas Pitt, Lord Camelford.

Brown laid out the roads and paths which still make the grounds around the house so beautiful and so attractive : so much nearer to nature than the average English park. Brown's triumphs remain to-day—shabby and unkempt, but in the main interesting.

But when we come to the house we certainly do not find much of nature. Stowe House itself was built entirely for the great and splendid society of the time. Domesticity and simple living are kept strictly in the background. The bedrooms and boudoirs look out on the inner court, and all the window-spaces of the spacious fronts are devoted to the reception-rooms. So great are those window-spaces that the successors of Lord Temple found themselves unable to pay the window-tax. They therefore walled up the centre of each of the huge windows, carrying their mimicry of reality to the extent of bricking up the blinds. It is the design of the present school authorities to clear away these obstructions and let in the light on the Stowe of the twentieth century.

It is also a mark of their spirit of display that the builders of Stowe poured out almost all their resources not on one front, but on two : one facing south-east and the other north-east. Both are equally splendid. Each has a great Corinthian-columned centre, approached by a lofty flight of stone steps and two flying wings leading to pavilions.

The aim was to achieve classical symmetry and ceremonial pomp, rather than the domestic peace of a simple country life. We may well doubt, indeed, whether our forefathers cared a " pin's fee " for the country life as we know it. They imported the pomp of the towns into the country.

Mounting the flight of steps on the north-east side

and entering the house, we find ourselves in a large, central hall called in the old days the "Oval" or the "Assembly"—and now being actually used by the school as a place of assemblage. It is built as a noble rotunda, surrounded by stately marble piers. The piers rise to a panelled dome copied from that of the Pantheon. Round the dome runs a beautiful, sculptured frieze of a Roman triumphal procession. The sculptor was the famous Valdré. He modelled himself on the famous triumphal arches of Antonine and Trajan.

Thus embellished, this circular hall in the centre of Stowe makes a truly magnificent chamber, a fine centre for so noble a house.

The hall opens to the right and to the left into spacious reception-rooms. On the right is the Grand Drawing Room, now used by the school as a dining-room. Beyond it is the State Dining Room. The third of these rooms is the old Breakfast Room. A few years ago these rooms were hung with magnificent pictures and tapestries, and filled with statues and marble fireplaces. But all these adornments were scattered in the second of those two great sales which impoverished Stowe and enriched the world.

Turning to the left from the central hall, we enter a series of rooms which could not be so easily dismantled. The first is the splendid Music Room, now adapted as a rest-room for one of the school-houses. The Sheraton furniture has gone. But the chief wealth of this room could not be scattered—the noble Corinthian columns, the panelled walls covered with Pompeian paintings; and above all the exquisite Raphael ceiling design—the "Dance of the Hours" round the Sun. The famous crystal lustre has departed, but the walls are picked out in gold. Fancy could not image a more beautiful and inspiring environment for the youth of England!

Beyond this room is the Library. The old books

have been scattered ; but the old bookcases are still there, and are being rapidly refilled by gifts from the well-wishers of the new school.

Beyond that room again is the old Armoury, also stripped of its armour and left bare for its successors. It is now a class-room.

Lord Peterborough's comment on Stowe still holds, "Immensity and Vanbrugh," he says in his sardonic way, "appears in the whole and in every part. I confess the Stately Sacharissa at Stowe, but am content with my little Amoret."

For living purposes one could be well content with a smaller mansion. It is a sign of health that modern taste should incline to simpler houses with simpler surroundings. But it is well to cherish the memory of greatness. It is good to watch an effort to put to new uses the fading glories of that splendid century :

"Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade
Of that which once was great, is passed away."

Many great and high-stepping men frequented the halls of Stowe. But the greatest visitor of all was the elder Pitt, the mighty orator and statesman who became Lord Chatham. We have seen him in illness at Hampstead : here at Stowe we always see him in health and happiness.

Temples and Grenvilles fade before that august name, and perhaps, when all is said and written, the greatest thing about the Grenvilles was that they allowed their sister Hester to marry Pitt.

Lady Hester Grenville was a very notable woman : one of the most remarkable women in a century of remarkable women. She made no great name for herself. She had none of the pride and self-will of her wayward grand-niece, Lady Hester Stanhope. But she tended and fostered her splendid husband. She bore with his moods. She fended off from that

high, sensitive soul the shocks of the indifferent and ungrateful world. Literally did this fine lady, with her old-fashioned sense of duty, look after her husband "for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health"—especially in sickness!

Here at Stowe Chatham spent some of the happiest days in his stormy life. He loved Stowe with a great passion—its gardens, its grottos, its statues, its temples—all its artificialities and falsities: all its little stucco prides. He quoted Latin at Stowe—and he wrote Latin from Stowe. Like many another statesman, he imagined himself tired of politics while at Stowe; but soon tired of Stowe when the political bugle called.

They all quarrelled, these eighteenth-century nobles. The Grenvilles quarrelled with Pitt, and Pitt quarrelled with the Grenvilles. Then the Grenvilles quarrelled with one another, and quarrelled with Pitt because he would not quarrel with the right Grenville. They were very much like other and simpler families—those Grenvilles.

Their quarrels reverberate through the still air of the eighteenth century like great thunderstorms. When these great noblemen quarrelled the simple people suffered. Their strifes are like the strifes of the Greek heroes. "*Quidquid Delirant Reges, Plebuntur Achivi*"—"Whatever the madness of kings, it is the people who always suffer."

It was the quarrel of Lord Temple with his brother-in-law, Chatham, which broke Chatham's health in 1767, and sent him into that sick retirement at Hampstead which cost us America.¹

Chatham was packed full with family affection, and these quarrels filled him with a strange agony. Divided between his country and his blood, he passed through torments. So anxious was he to avoid such conflicts, that he manœuvred many meetings of

¹ See "The Elder Pitt" and "Pitt House," pp. 185.

peace. There is a curious description of one of those meetings in the *Grenville Papers*. It was in 1765 (May 30th), and it took place at Chatham's favourite country house, "Hayes":

"Mr. and Mrs. Grenville went with Lord Temple and Mrs. James Grenville to dine at Hayes. Mr. Pitt expressed pleasure at the reconciliation of the family, and early in the course of conversation took occasion to say to Mr. Grenville that in politics each had taken separate walks and opinions, and therefore wished that their intercourse might be of a friendly domestic nature, without entering upon political topics. Mr. Grenville gave readily and cheerfully in to this idea: and said he sincerely thought it best, and each kept strictly to it."

How sensible! How amiable! But this high tone could not always be kept, as, for instance, when Lord Temple, in 1766, refused to join Chatham's Ministry, except as an equal of Chatham. Now, no one could dream of the "gawky squire" as the equal of Pitt—not even Pitt himself. So it became Pitt's painful duty to tell him so. Then was the veil of the Temple rent!

But reconciliation came again, for it is wonderful how these brothers really loved one another. In 1769, at Stowe, there was a solemn peace-making between Lord Temple and Lord Chatham. They came together over Wilkes: strange magnet of harmony! Lord Temple, indeed, at first prudently corresponded through his sister, Lady Hester; and then, only gradually, with Chatham direct.

It was fortunate that they made their peace while they were in the way. For next year (1770) tragedy descended on Stowe. George Grenville died, and his brother, Lord Temple, stricken to the heart, definitely retired from public life to live at Stowe. He lived there a happy nine years, absorbed in the woods and gardens he loved so well. Infirmary grew upon him. Never able to walk with ease,

always bent almost double, he now ceased to walk at all. He drove about the park in a pony carriage, and the roads were extended.

One day his pony stumbled. Lord Temple was thrown out on to his head. He fractured his skull. He lingered insensible for some days, and died on September 12th, 1779; at the age of sixty-eight—a year and a half after Chatham's tragic end in the House of Lords.

So once more desolation fell on Stowe. For Lord Temple, like Lord Cobham, died childless.

Vanity of vanities!

A curse of barrenness seemed to lie on that race.

Stowe passed to the Grenville nephews—the sons of George. One of them became Prime Minister—the Wyndham Grenville of the Napoleonic period. He became Prime Minister in 1806–1807, just over forty years after his uncle's Premiership.¹ He presided over the "Ministry of all the Talents" and abolished the Slave Trade.

Thus the Grenville family supplied two Prime Ministers to England in less than half a century—not a bad record!

Since then the family has retired from the public stage, but mounted the ladder of nobility. A dukedom has flowered and faded, and once more the curse of Stowe has extinguished the male line. With the scattering and dwindling of the family fortunes, the gracious lady who is the last of that great line—Lady Kinloss²—has lived at Stowe in one wing only of Stowe House. The treasures have melted away: and now the family has gone too.

Those who build magnificently must pay the penalty. They invest their money in a form which brings no material return. Many of the greatest

¹ George Grenville was Premier in 1763–5.

² Mary Morgan Grenville, daughter of the last Duke of Buckingham and Chandos.

fortunes of the eighteenth century were dissipated in this manner. The fruits were burdens instead of profits. The history of these great houses is punctuated with ruin. These palaces, like the Pyramids, are often funeral monuments.

But we owe them some gratitude. They built for the future :

“What’s time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!
Man has Forever.”

That was their dream. All this building was part of their craving for immortality.

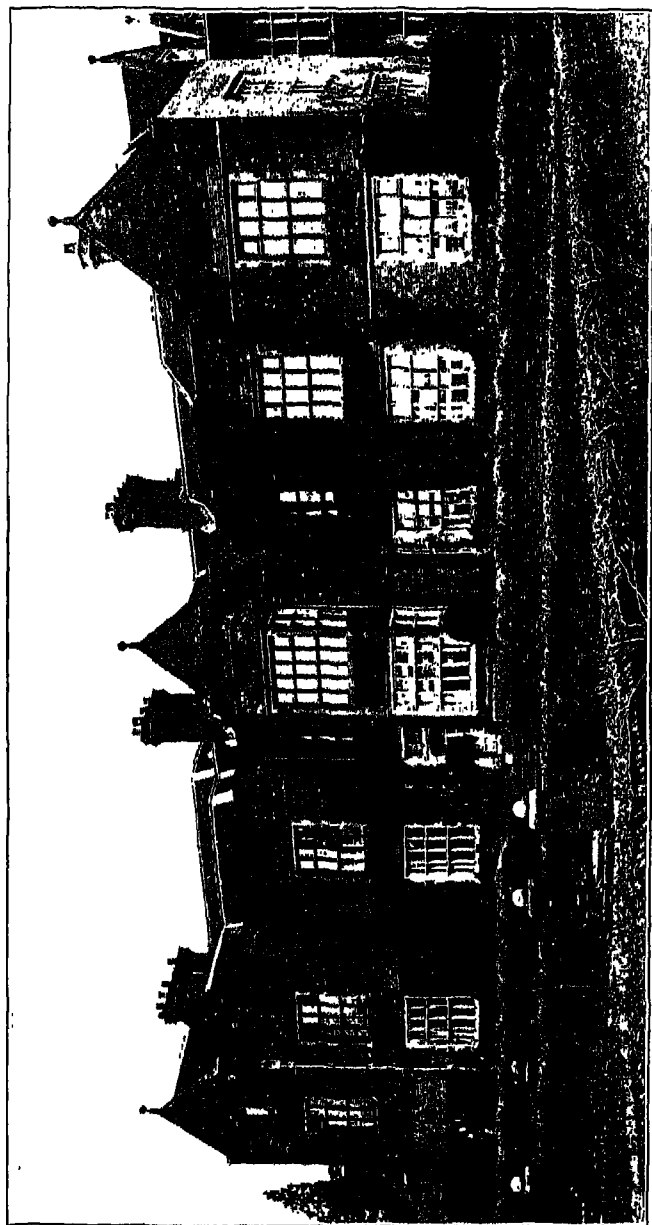
It was near akin to religion.

[NOTE.—Stowe House is now the home of a school of 350 boys, and is proving a healthy and happy mansion for English youth.]

XV

Oliver and "Chequers"

"Nature left the wide world poor
And made this place the 'Chequer of her store."
MICHAEL DRAYTON.



Topical Press Agency.

CHEQUERS COURT.

XV

Oliver and "Chequers"

STANDING on the main ridge of the noble Chilterns, in the midst of a spacious and ancient garden, Chequers Court is one of the most beautiful and stately mansions of Central England.

It has come as a timely gift to-day to the over-pressed rulers of Great Britain; and already four Prime Ministers have found here "the veriest school of peace." Peace, indeed, seems to clothe the great mansion as with a garment.

The russet-brown of its brickwork gives to it a touch of the beauty of the antique world. The large mullioned windows speak of bountiful light and air; the doorways open on to smooth lawns and glowing beds of colour. The house itself stands nobly, on a slight eminence, free from all fence or wall.

Here you have England at its very best, steeped in the calm of our tranquil central country side; but with a horizon girt in by the bare, gaunt downs that hint at the grimmer side of our island life.

Chequers Court has already been annexed by the nation and taken to its heart. Its rooms and gardens are already achieving history. There is a bench in the northern garden already famous as the scene of a great international discussion between the Prime Ministers of Europe. There is the room where Mr. Baldwin prepared his last Budget. There is the hall where Mr. Ramsay Macdonald loves to sit.

Thus Chequers Court has begun to make modern history. Its walls already echo to the debates of Labour Cabinets and Socialist Administrations. But none of these things disturb the central calm of the Chilterns. For this building has also a mighty past, and it will take a great deal of change to create a greater future.

Happily for us, the splendid donor of this mansion, Lord Lee of Fareham, before presenting it to the nation, restored it to its ancient Elizabethan style, and removed the false Gothic dress in which it was clothed during the nineteenth century. Thus the new official country residence of our Prime Ministers recalls both within and without that high moment of our national existence when the greatest of our queens sat on the throne. It breathes

“the spacious times of great Elizabeth.”

But Chequers Court has a history far back beyond that. It dates back to that early, hard-hitting period when England itself was on the anvil: when foreign kings, lisping foreign tongues, were hammering a divided England into an iron unity of life and government.

For the first known resident of this dwelling was a certain de Chekers, named Elias, an official of the Royal Exchequer in the reign of Henry II. It was at the time of the famous Chancellorship of Bishop Richard of London. During those few weeks of the illness and absence of Mr. Bonar Law, when Mr. Baldwin occupied Chequers Court as Chancellor of the Exchequer, the house was thus really returning to its first origin as the home of the Treasurer of England.

In the quaint and curious style of that early day, this Elias, the official of the Royal Exchequer, took his name from the checker-board used by those early financiers. There was probably a touch of

mediaeval humour in the rough translation from the Latin *De Scaccario* into "de Chekers." But that jest gave the name both to the family, and after them to the house.

Chequers Court is thus simply the house of the de Chekers, that thirteenth-century family of faithful civil servants which has long since ceased to exist.

Let us figure the real significance of the moment in English history when this Exchequer clerk was sent down to occupy a house on this windy ridge of the Chilterns, trusting in the power of the central law to defend him from all perils of lawless attack.

Ten years earlier the risk would have been too great. But Henry II, the first of the Plantagenet kings, had come across the water to save this country from the long confusion and disorder of civil war.

For twenty years the ill-fated King Stephen had desperately striven to assert his authority over a divided land. If we should have any doubt to-day of the real terrors of civil war, we have only to look back on the records of that precarious reign.

At the end of that struggle England was reduced to a howling desert, dotted with strong and menacing castles. Behind the walls of those castles, fierce and tempestuous barons defended themselves from one another and the King.

Meanwhile, England perished.

To that condition had the twenty years' struggle for a disputed crown between Stephen, the grandson of William the Conqueror, and Matilda, the daughter of Henry I, reduced this country of England.

Then Henry the Plantagenet stepped on to the stage.

Henry II was "a tall, stout man, with a short neck," and he gave short shrift to the disturbers of the peace of England. He brought from France an army of well-disciplined mercenaries, and in a few years he had captured and razed to the ground

a round thousand of those barons' castles. Henry, in these years, ruthlessly disbanded the armies of the civil war. He annulled all Stephen's wild and random laws. He established the claim of the central power throughout the length and breadth of the land. He founded that modern system of centralized justice which still marks England—the travelling assizes, the King's Bench, and the Common Law. By his struggle with Becket he asserted the power of the State against the power of the Church. Above all, he established a central National Exchequer.

It is not too much to say that in those thirty-five years that intervened between the civil wars of Stephen and the knight-errantry of Richard I, this plain, blunt, able man, Henry II, practically saved the soul of England. It was as a foreigner he came, and his true country was France. That perhaps gave him his real power over England. For he stood outside all civil dissensions. It was as an outsider he beat us into peace.

Chequers Court is a true memorial of that wonderful reign. Since then, indeed, it has been often rebuilt. It was reconstructed in each of the three succeeding centuries—the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth—so that the final form became Elizabethan rather than Norman. But the name and the memory still holds, and the association of the house with the central power of England has never ceased since those times.

It is a very strange fact about certain English houses—houses like Knole, Hatfield, Blickling, or Chequers—that they may return to private life for a time; but always once more—century after century—the call comes to them for public service.

Houses seem to have characters. Mansions possess personalities. In some cases the abiding personality is national and patriotic. Over the portals of such houses seems to be written "Noblesse oblige."

Thus it is with Chequers Court. Sir Ralph de Chekers died in 1254, and left one daughter only, Catherine de Chekers. The name perished, and the house passed to the family of the Hawtreys. But in the sixteenth century it again—once more!—came into public service: this time in a less pleasant fashion.

Elizabeth chose it as one of her private State prisons.

Elizabeth was a monarch who took no risks. She feared women more than men. She kept one eye on Mary Stuart, and the other on a number of other young women whom she suspected of undue ambition. Among these young ladies was an unfortunate damsel of the name of Lady Mary Grey, the sister of that still more unhappy girl, Lady Jane, who was thrust upon the throne after the death of Edward VI, and, after a few weeks of queenship, executed on Tower Hill. Elizabeth picked a quarrel with Lady Mary. It was over a marriage. The young woman had the bad taste to marry a certain Thomas Keyes, who was Captain of Sandgate Castle. It is not quite clear whether Elizabeth feared the wife more because she had married beneath her, or the husband because he had married above her. But Mary Grey could not do anything right!

At any rate, Elizabeth decided to take action—and action with her meant at least imprisonment. So the Lady Mary Grey—now the Lady Keyes—was sent down to Chequers Court and imprisoned in an attic-room at the top of Chequers Court. The room still survives and can still be identified as Lady Mary's prison. The grim queen—who preferred men to women—sent instructions that the young girl was to go out of doors "only as much as was necessary for her health." So there this poor little suspect was kept for many years of duress.

William Hawtrey died in 1597, and by that curious chance which has haunted the history of the Court—the birthplace of heiresses—he had neither son nor grandson to succeed him. His successor was Lady Woolley, his elder granddaughter. In 1637 she died, and was succeeded by Lady Croke, whose husband, Sir Henry Croke, was the son of one of the Speakers of Elizabeth's parliaments.

Then there fell on Chequers Court the full blast of the civil wars, and the Croke family, like so many others, was divided between the two sides. Lady Croke's second son, Henry, was a Royalist, and in consequence Chequers Court was sequestered by Parliament. But his brother was a Parliamentarian, and finally the daughter of the house was married to a Cromwellian lawyer, John Thurbarne. That lawyer was shrewd as well as godly, and before his marriage he stipulated that in case of his death Chequers Court should go to his own daughter by an earlier marriage.

But fate fought on the side of the Crokes. In 1713 the estate returned to Joanna, the daughter of Mary Croke. Now Joanna's first husband, Colonel Revett, was killed in one of Marlborough's bloody battles, Malplaquet (1709), and Joanna afterwards married no less a person than Sir John Russell, the son of Oliver Cromwell's youngest daughter, Frances.

That was how—by that circuitous, mazy route—Chequers Court became connected with the Cromwell name and tradition.

Chequers Court became a shrine of Oliver Cromwell's memory.

For the house had thus passed to a grandson of the great Oliver, and the grandson held both his grandfather and his mother in the highest honour and affection. He brought his mother—once Mrs.

Rich, now Lady Russell—to Chequers Court, and for a time the house was inhabited by a daughter of the Great Protector.

Sir John Russell died young, and his son, who was an ex-Governor of Bengal, brought the whole interests of his family from Cambridgeshire to Buckinghamshire. He brought from the Eastern Counties, the home of the Cromwell tradition, a breath of the true Ironside worship into the heart of Central England. For a whole century these two families, the Revetts and the Russells, shared Chequers Court in friendly harmony. They married and were given in marriage, until in 1804 both lines suddenly died out.

This family of the Russells, descendants of the Cromwells, used their tenure of Chequers Court to perpetuate Oliver's memory.

They gathered into this house an unique collection of Cromwellian relics and portraits. Those portraits and relics now form the most arresting interest within the house.

There is the Cromwell Life-mask, certainly the truest clue to his features—far more trustworthy than the equally famous Death-mask in the London Museum at Lancaster House: as much more trustworthy as life is more trustworthy than death.

There is the singularly impressive and convincing portrait of Oliver's mother, one of those rare, beautiful presentments of that great woman that add to our regard and reverence for her memory. The picture of Oliver himself is one of the best of Walker's, although it is surpassed in interest by the Lely portrait at Sidney-Sussex College, Cambridge.

There is also a deeply interesting portrait of Oliver as a child; a miniature of John Pym; and portraits of two of Oliver's daughters—Mrs. Fleetwood and Lady Fauconberg.

Thus Chequers bridges the gulf that divides

modern England from the Great Protector. It is a well-stored shrine, creating a new link between the modern British State and the seventeenth-century Commonwealth.

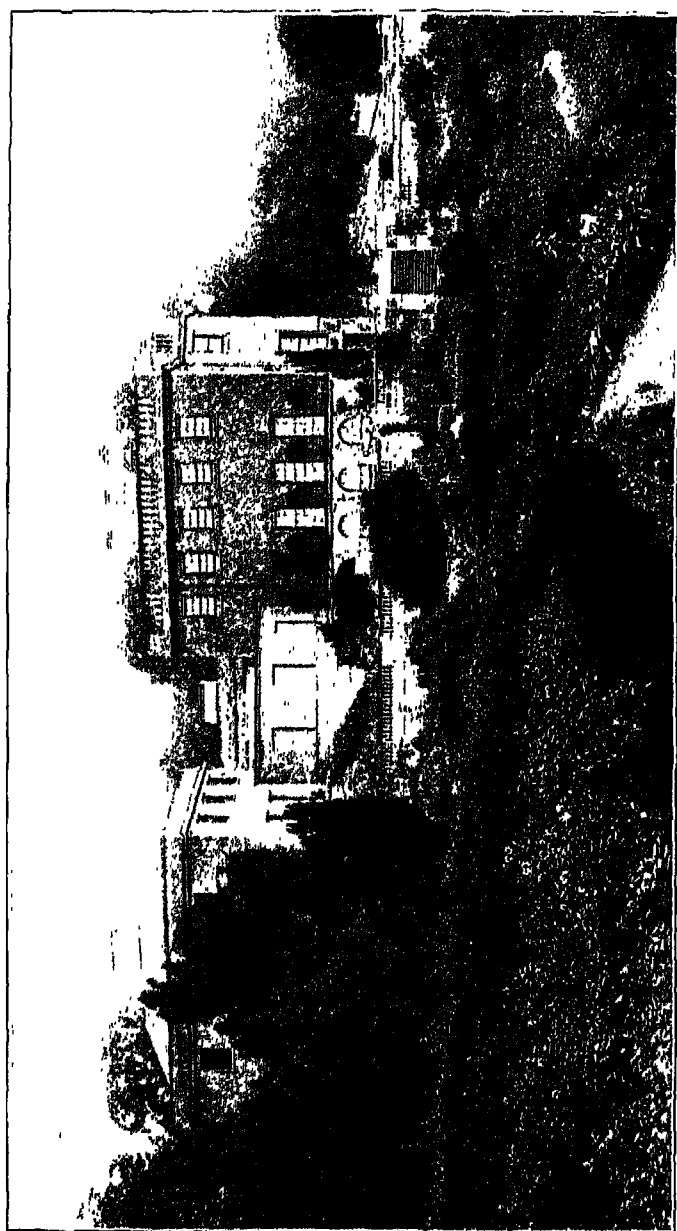
After all, nothing new or strange can happen to Chequers.

XVI

The Harcourts and Nuneham

“Harcourt I see, for eloquence renowned,
The mouth of justice, oracle of law!”

Epistle to Pope: GAY.



H. Nelson King.

NUNEHAM: from the North-West.

XVI

The Harcourts and Nuneham

A FEW miles below Oxford, just where the River Thames, flowing softly, settles down to the long reach that brings it to Abingdon, the great house of Nuneham Courtenay tops the hill. It looks out over the broad and fertile valley of the Oxfordshire Thames with distant glimpses through the woods of the "dreaming spires of Oxford." Built there in the early eighteenth century, giving house and home to a very remarkable and outstanding English family, Nuneham Courtenay has stood for two centuries.

The Harcourts belong to that robust, pugnacious English stock that has descended from the adventurers that rallied round William the Norman when he called to his side against Harold all that was restless and enterprising in Western Europe. Among the list of the comrades of William figures a De Harcourt, and it is from that Norman stock that the line has come down with scarcely a break in its continuity. It has produced men of every variety—soldiers, sailors, clerics, lawyers, and politicians. There has been a Harcourt Lord Chancellor; there has been a Harcourt Archbishop—and at the end of the nineteenth century there was very nearly a Harcourt Prime Minister of England.

The pictures hanging in the chambers and galleries of the great house at Nuneham testify to the energy and activity of this stock. The women, indeed,

have been almost as active as the men, and at the present moment one remarkable woman has brought to bear on the fortunes of this house all the enterprise and resource of American wealth.

The four most remarkable of these Harcourts appear in every phase of their life along the corridors and in the reception-rooms of Nuneham. The Lord Chancellor is perhaps the most modest of the three, although the golden bag that carried his Great Seal is still preserved in the big drawing-room. But the first Earl Harcourt, who became Viceroy of Ireland in 1772, figures at every stage of his long career.

There is also, hidden away in one of the corridors, a picture of a little dog with keen, bright eyes and sharp ears. That dog was the devoted friend of Earl Harcourt. On a tragic day in 1777, when the Earl had attained the age of sixty-three, there was a hue and cry in the great house. Both the dog and his master had disappeared. Finally, after a long search, they were both found in a well not far from the house. It was obvious from the attitudes of the bodies that the little dog had fallen in the well, and that the Earl had made a desperate effort to pull it out. In so doing Lord Harcourt had thrust his head into a position beneath the water from which he was unable to extricate it, and thus he was helplessly drowned along with his favourite. With all the great achievements of his larger life, I cannot help thinking that there was nothing became him so well as this little act of pity which led to its tragic close.

It was that spirit of self-sacrifice that was inherited by the great Sir William Harcourt, so familiar as a public figure to the last generation. He was a man of infinite courage and self-sacrifice for the common weal.

I knew him well. Often during the great struggles of the "nineties" he would carry me off from the

Lobby to his sanctum in Richmond Gardens, and read out to me, at full length, his speech of to-morrow. "How do you like that?" he would say, and, without waiting for an answer, give his own appreciation in a long, bubbly chuckle. He would labour greatly at his speeches—too greatly. The onlookers would heave a deep sigh when he rose and placed on the table of the House of Commons the little pile of notes which, we all knew, he would plough through conscientiously from start to finish. Yet what good impromptu speeches he could make! In our opinion, they were always his best: and that was the opinion of the House of Commons also.

When we said that to him he would always reply: "Ah, my dear fellow! But the success of a speech depends on how it looks in the newspapers next morning!"

As to newspapers, he had one fixed prejudice. He would not write a letter to any newspaper except *The Times*. I remember once, when I was Assistant Editor of the *Daily News*, pressing him to open a correspondence.

"No, my dear fellow, it is impossible!"

"But it would help the Liberal Party!"

"I can't help that. I hope to die without ever writing a letter to any newspaper except *The Times*!"

There was the Plantagenet touch!

In spite of his tempers, so well known to the world, he was a most kindly and lovable man. If any proof of that were needed, his son's devotion would suffice. "Lulu" Harcourt gave up his life to his father. He sadly handicapped his career by postponing his entrance into the House of Commons till his father had died. While Sir William was reading those speeches, "Lulu" always used to be sitting at his desk in the corner of the room, writing, writing—letters for his father.

When "Lulu" did come into politics, he had one or two definite, passionate interests. One was for the Office of Works. He inherited from some ancestor a passion for laying out gardens, and he could give full vent to it in the royal parks. I had many a stroll with him in those spacious days, planning out the little playgrounds for the London children whom he so intensely cared for: dreaming of improvements here and alterations there.

"I think I can persuade the King to agree to that," he used to say. For Edward VII took the parks with equal seriousness.

"Lulu's" next passion was for the Colonies. No years of his life were happier than those at the Colonial Office. Yes, and he was one of the best Colonial Secretaries that England has ever had.

The younger Harcourt was never strong, and the Great War wore him down. But by the swiftness and dexterity with which he handled the internal politics of the Empire he did much for victory. We can see now that it was not a matter of course that every Dominion should come to our aid. That result was produced largely by the splendid persuasiveness and accessibility of Lord Harcourt at the opening of the war.

Both father and son were devoted public servants: with no thought or word except for the public good and the welfare of the Empire. They lived and died for it.

It was really a most characteristic feature about Sir William Harcourt's career that his greatest political achievement practically ruined his own fortunes. By passing the death duties he condemned himself to pay a tribute on the estate of Nuneham Courtenay such as, for the moment, crippled and almost extinguished it. Thrice since Sir William passed those death duties in 1894 has Nuneham had to

pay full tribute to the State. First, on the death of Aubrey Harcourt, his nephew; then on the death of Sir William himself; and finally on the death of his son, Lord Harcourt. No wonder that the pulse of life beats somewhat slowly at Nuneham to-day, and that the beautiful and wide-spreading gardens planted by "Lulu" Harcourt are feeling the shadow of decay. For even the greatest stored resources of the past are unequal to meeting the clamant demands made by the British Treasury each time a family has to pass through the portals of death.

Yet Nuneham Courtenay stands to-day as one of the most lovable country houses in mid-England. The house itself is a model of simple, strong, comfortable building. It stands high, fronted by terraces and flanked by garden walks. It is sheltered from the north by groves of gigantic beech trees. The noble park, sloping down to the river, is, thanks to the historic hospitality of the Harcourts, familiar to many generations of Oxford undergraduates. Picnickers are traditionally welcome on stated days to those green banks and beneath those umbrageous trees.

The walks and groves themselves are redolent of the eighteenth century. At every turn are little temples of wood and bark; urns and memorial verses; all the little idols of that fashionable paganism of the eighteenth-century nobility. It is Stowe on a small scale. The very seats are vocal with verses from the fanciful, horticultural poetry of that well-dressed century—Prior, Matthew Green, Whitehead, Marvell and so forth. At one point, where you see a vista of Oxford through the trees, Matthew Green speaks to you:

"Here stillness, height, and solemn shade
Invite, and contemplation aid."

A little further on, near to an urn, are two lines of sentimental friendship—

“Harcourt and friendship this memorial raise
Near to the oak where Whitehead oft reclined.”

On another seat is that loveliest of garden lyrics, engraved by “Lulu” Harcourt himself in the midst of the water gardens which he so dearly loved:

“The Kiss of the Sun for Pardon,
The Song of the Birds for Mirth:
One is nearer God’s Heart in a Garden
Than anywhere else on Earth.”

Up in the woods, to the north of the house, is the old parish church which has been turned into a memorial chapel of Sir William Harcourt. It was characteristic of the power of the nobility of the eighteenth century that when the first Earl Harcourt built Nuneham and enclosed his park, he just moved the village of Nuneham right back several miles, deeming that it was too near for his peace of mind. In doing so he calmly took the parish church over as a private chapel for the Harcourt family, and on the walls of the church are busts of Archbishop Harcourt and Sir William Harcourt.

Beneath the bust of Sir William Harcourt, Lord Harcourt, before he died, inscribed five stanzas from Tennyson’s *Two Voices*:

“At least, not rotting like a weed,
But, having sown some generous seed,
Fruitful of further thought and deed,

“To pass, when Life her light withdraws,
Not void of righteous self-applause,
Nor in a merely selfish cause—

“In some good cause, not in mine own,
To perish, wept for, honour’d, known,
And like a warrior overthrown:

"Whose eyes are dim with glorious tears,
When, soil'd with noble dust, he hears
His country's war-song thrill his cars :

"Then dying of a mortal stroke,
What time the foeman's line is broke,
And all the war is roll'd in smoke."

Of those lines we may say that they were nobly chosen as a fit tribute from a worthy son to a worthy father.

If you would fully understand the genius of a typical English family like the Harcourts, you must journey from Nuneham to the little village of Stanton Harcourt, beyond Oxford.

For while Nuneham represents the second stage, Stanton Harcourt represents the first in the great march of this family.

Stanton Harcourt lies sheltered in the gentle, rustic scenery beyond the Cumnor Hills, on the north bank of the Thames. To reach Stanton Harcourt from Oxford you must take the ferry at Bablock-hythe, where Matthew Arnold saw his vision of the Scholar Gipsy sitting in the punt and trailing "wet fingers in the cool stream."

It was there that the early Harcourts planted themselves after the Conquest, lived in the manor-house, and worshipped in the church for many centuries.

The church still stands intact—a stalwart, early English structure, stoutly built against war and weather. The great spire still stands out above the high trees which wrap the village in foliage. It seems a type of the deep calm which embraces this "Sweet Auburn" of Oxfordshire.

But though the church stands, the manor-house has almost disappeared. The main body of the building was taken down and used as a quarry for building Nuneham Courtenay. The letters printed in the *Harcourt Papers* show clearly how and why

this was done—the difficulty of obtaining stone from the Headington quarries, the impatience of Lord Harcourt and his lady, and the obvious handiness of a great supply of well-cut stone which could be carried easily from point to point along the river.

Thus the Harcourts themselves destroyed their own ancient mansion and practically transferred it from Stanton Harcourt to Nuneham Courtenay. The manor-house had been little used for a long time before, and had fallen into a state of decay. But though the main building went there was one tower which survived—one tower and a kitchen. Those two buildings remain standing to-day, and form two very remarkable remnants.

The tower has become practically an independent building. It rises to five storeys, and from its roof one can survey the whole surrounding country. The rooms on each storey are in fairly good repair, although unfurnished and unoccupied. But the remarkable chamber is the main room on the fourth floor. That room is panelled throughout with oak from which the polish has scarcely departed. It was occupied by Alexander Pope for two summers in 1718-19. Chancellor Harcourt was always a great friend of literary men, and he was glad that his picturesque tower should prove useful to anyone. Pope wrote from that tower a famous whimsical letter, a gay and sprightly description of his strange eyrie, showing that he could be cheerful under untoward circumstances.

Pope went there for loneliness, and he must have found it. You climb to Pope's room in the tower up a winding stone staircase, supported by a rope. It is an abode for bats and owls. Pope must have felt a certain pride in having lived there. For he scratched with a pin on a piece of red glass a record of his having written the fifth book of the *Iliad*

in that tower—"Here Alexander Pope translated the Fifth Book of the *Iliad*."

That piece of red glass has been cut out, and is now preserved at Nuneham.

Pope's stay in the tower gave cause to grave misunderstanding in the village. Time has only recently given the last blow to the legend that Pope Alexander once resided in the tower. When Pope was there he wished to engage a servant. But the mothers in the village refused to allow their girls to wait upon the Pope. So much do we suffer from the confusion of names, and so often do we bear the burden without the glory of those who are greater than ourselves!

But the kitchen is even more remarkable than the tower. It is like one of those great buildings in the valley of Mycenæ, which are alternately supposed to be tombs or treasure-houses. You enter through a stone porch and you find yourself in a gigantic interior shaped like an inverted funnel, with two huge fireplaces, but no chimneys. The smoke of centuries has blackened the sides of the kitchen and ascended to the lofty top of the funnel. From there it has escaped through little openings into the free air, for until quite recently there was a free vent at the top for the smoke.

The summit roof has been lately restored, and was discovered to be a marvellous structure of oak, skilfully welded together, forming an amazing achievement of endurance and strength scarcely to be surpassed by any modern iron-work—so powerfully did our forefathers build in the national material of those days.

The kitchen is reputed to date back to the time of King John, although the manor-house is commonly supposed to be a structure of Edward IV. But the whole building gives an impression of a very early and primitive age. All round the big

fireplaces there are still iron spits which might easily be used to cook whole animals. It was a day of gargantuan appetites and splendid hungers—the day when they used this Devil's Kitchen.

We pass from the kitchen to the church. There, in the northern aisle, behind a gate of iron-work, are the tombs of the Harcourt family, restored and repainted about half a century ago by Edward Harcourt. Thus renovated, they form a singularly interesting group of mediæval sepulchres in the splendour that our forefathers loved, brilliant with varied colouring and adorned with helmets, coronets, and flags.

The tomb in the far corner, that gaunt, recumbent warrior, is the Harcourt who fought with Henry VII on Bosworth Field. The white flag above him is the Harcourt standard which he bore at that battle. West of him lies the Earl, in all the gorgeous robes of his order, with his coronets hung above them. Opposite the Earl lies the Archbishop, a very beautiful recumbent figure. In the further corner there are the tombs of a mediæval Harcourt and his lady, both wearing the Order of the Garter. It is one of the very few cases where a lady has been made a member of that mighty Order. Sir William Harcourt's own statue, a bronze copy of the statue in the House of Commons, stands outside the grille in the transept of the church.

* * * *

It is worth while to stand by these tombs in order to comprehend better the career of that great Parliamentary warrior, Sir William Harcourt. He was a great Parliamentary fighter and a daring platform speaker. He just missed the Premiership, and perhaps that crown of British ambition was hardly suited for his head. He would have been better suited to become a mediæval English monarch. For he possessed a singular strain of capricious

wilfulness which often unfitted him for common and collective action.

I veritably believe that this side of his nature was due to prolonged contemplation of his ancestry. Harcourt's claim to royal blood was a common jest among his contemporaries. But he himself took that claim quite seriously. When he became a Professor at Cambridge he emblazoned his rooms—the old Prince of Wales' rooms at Trinity College—with a gorgeous and highly coloured blending of the Harcourt and Plantagenet arms. Men laughed and thought it a good joke. But Sir William Harcourt, sitting in a Cabinet Council and talking to his colleagues, carried the Plantagenet method very far.

The result was that when the critical moment came which was to decide whether he was to be Premier or another, there was just that little rally of resentment which, thrust into the scale at a delicate moment, kicks the balance and decides that a man shall for ever miss the aim and goal of his life.

Thus it was that this governing memory of past royalty unfitted Sir William Harcourt for moving as a common man among his kind. "Gently comes the world to those that are cast in the gentle mould." But Sir William Harcourt was not cast in gentle mould. He was, by nature, a ruler of men—imperious and a little tyrannical: always expecting and commanding obedience and respect.

There he was a great contrast to his gentler son, whose life was gilded with a devotion to his father which seemed to belong to some greater and nobler past.

Not that Sir William Harcourt was in any respect a snob. Late in life he was offered a peerage and refused it. "I prefer to remain an English gentleman," was his proud reply. He told me that his object was to enable his son to sit in the House of

Commons. Curiously enough, it was that son, "Lulu," who accepted the peerage, left the House of Commons, and re-established the house of Harcourt.

Sir William Harcourt was just a big Englishman—large-hearted, hot-tempered, at once liberal and prejudiced; both scholarly and religious, both grave and gay. It is a type which no foreigner can understand. Here was a man who was a democrat in his politics, and fond of the rough and tumble of life; delighted in the life of the Lobbies, and thoroughly enjoyed himself on the platform. Yet in other moods he loved choice scenes, choice company, choice books, and choice wines. Radical as he was, he was also a scholar and an aristocrat. With all his popular sympathies, he could never escape from his blood.

It was only at the very end of his life, in 1904, that Sir William Harcourt inherited Nuneham from his nephew Aubrey—that young, handsome Harcourt whose comely face is depicted in a very beautiful portrait that hangs in a corner on a landing at Nuneham.

Aubrey had loved a lady dearly. But his father Edward held back his consent to the marriage. The lady fell suddenly ill and was carried tragically to her death from the Cathedral in Oxford. Aubrey never forgave his father or recovered his own happiness. He inherited Nuneham and lived on there for years in melancholy solitude, nursing his grief and his hatred until at last death took him too—and Sir William, too late, came into his inheritance.

Nuneham Courtenay came to Sir William burdened with debt, and it proved a very heavy charge on his old age. He loved the house and every outlook from it—the peeps through the giant trees on to the silver river, the distant views, the great winds that come blustering up from the south-west. But he came to it too late.

"I feel like Horace Walpole when he became Lord Orford," he wrote to his wife,¹ as he scanned the confusions of his ancestral home. Perhaps it was the fatigue of it that caused his heart to pause and halt one night of gloom after he had gone to his rest apparently so full of happiness.

For he had already built a home and laid out a pleasure for himself down in the New Forest, called "Malwood." He left that house to his younger son Robert—"My Yankee son," as he loved to call him, his eyes resting in happy gaiety on the comely face of Motley's daughter, his second wife and the companion of his later days.

He loved Malwood, and his favourite name was "the Squire of Malwood." He kept open house there and open gardens, almost embarrassingly so to all who belonged to him. There was little privacy for his family. He allowed the public to invade, not only his park, but his lawns. He felt in a curious way that he belonged to the people, and was one of them. Yet that feeling was always combined with a touch of kingship as if he was their rightful monarch.

It was only a phase in the Harcourt history. From Malwood, now sold into other hands, the Harcourts have come back to Nuneham Courtenay, the true home of the family. It is a characteristic centre and fortress of that free and most independent English type—the country squire. At all the great crises of our history it has been the country squires in the end who have struck a note of freedom and independence. The townsman, very rich, becomes the slave of convention and multitudes. But the squire acquires the habits both of independence and of command. Living in a feudal detachment,

¹ See the admirable *Life of Sir William Harcourt*, by Mr. A. G. Gardiner, mentioned in the Bibliography, p. 281.

he acquires a habit of government, and yet, all the time, he learns to cherish freedom.

So it has been with the Hampdens, the Cromwells, the Walpoles, the Greys, and the Harcourts—they have all come from this stock, the small squires of England, who have so often saved their land.

Nuneham Courtenay to-day stands as a splendid memory of that great tradition in English life. When the first Earl Harcourt began to build this house from the stones of Stanton Harcourt, he designed only a villa. Then the villa became a house, and finally the house became something nearer to a palace. Generation after generation have added room to room, wing to wing, picture to picture, and tree to tree.

May it continue to grow!

Afterword

SO here we make an end of our tale of Mansions
—and Men.

They are scattered like stars over our beautiful country—these mansions—soothing the vistas of our landscapes. Fronted by their soft lawns and girt by their gentle woods, they make England one vast park.

It is the ruling passion of Englishmen—this for the mansion that is a home.

The other day I was sitting in the Albert Hall, when one of our greatest singers, Dame Melba, being clamoured to for an encore, gave the choice to her audience.

“What would you like me to sing?”

There was one mighty shout—“Home, Sweet Home.”

That was the song they really yearned for. What cared they how old it was—how often heard! The cynics might scoff, but there spoke the simple, human heart. “Home, Sweet Home”—that was their ultimate desire: now, as ever.

Robbie Burns, who best understood the human heart—little as he himself cared for the home life!—knew that this note was always a sure appeal:

“A happy fireside clime for weans and wife,
That is the pathos and sublime of human life.”

When the cottar on his Saturday night comes back from his labour, with what deep sympathy and

insight does Burns, the wild, homeless poet, sing the lyric of that fireside clime :

“ His wee bit ingle, blinkin’ bonilie,
His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wifie’s smile,
The lisping infant, prattling on his knee,
Does a’ his weary kiaugh and care beguile.”

So that we may dare to rephrase the old adage thus—“ Mansions makyth Man.”

“ Men and Mansions.” Say, rather—“ Men and Cottages.” For it is the cottage that is the only wear of the great mass of humanity. To them mansions are chiefly known from the outside.

The cottage is their only palace, and of all the great revolutionary cries that have ever thrilled the world, there was none ever greater than that cry of St. Just, which carried the revolutionary armies across Europe—“ War to the Palace ! Peace to the Cottage ! ”

After all, those soldiers knew what a poor, feckless, helpless being is man without a home : a draggled wretch, a Caliban in youth and a King Lear in old age, exposed to all the winds that blow, better naked than clothed, grubbing in the earth for his food, tearing at his uncooked meat with unwashed hands, sinking down to brutal companionship with the brute earth !

So Shakespeare makes Timon of Athens, when he had quarrelled with mankind, leave his mansions and his banquets, and live in caves and ditches. That act alone cuts him right away from humanity. He becomes a mansionless man.

Timon leaves all the warmth and friendly society of his kind, and chooses a homeless life. Shakespeare, the master-builder, envisages this as the most definite defiance of home-loving humanity :

“ Come not to me again ; but say to Athens,
Timon hath made his everlasting mansion
Upon the beached verge of the salt flood ;

Who once a day with his embossed froth
The turbulent surge shall cover : thither come,
And let my grave-stone be your oracle."

Shakespeare spoke well.

"Let my grave-stone be your oracle."

For Man without a Mansion—the homeless Man—
is already half-way to the Grave.

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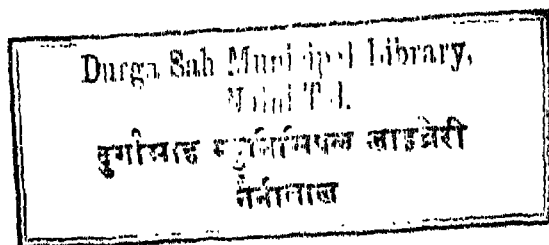
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INDEX

- A Becket, Thomas, 56, 252
 Abingdon, 259
 Act of Succession, 95
 Adelaide Cottage, Windsor, 26
 Althorp, 227
 Amelia, The Princess, 24, 236
 Amec, wife of Lawrence Washington, 225, 227
 Angelo, Michael, 28
 Anne of Cleves, 95
 Anne, Queen, 28, 47, 90, 172, 173; and Marlborough, 177, 179
 Aragon, Catherine of, 74
 Arnold, Matthew, 265
 Asquith, Right Hon. H. H., 42
 Audley End and Chancellor Audley, 89 *et seq.*
 Aylesbury, 121

 Bablockhythe, 265
 Bacon, Francis, Lord Verulam, 40
 Baldwin, Stanley, The Right Hon., 42, 249, 250
 Banbury Cross, 169
 Banqueting House, 12, and Charles I., 151 *et seq.*
 Barkstead, John, 49
 Bath, 191
 Beaconsfield, 199, 200-1
 Beard, Dr., 121
 Benson, Dr. Archbishop of Canterbury, 67
 Blenheim, Battle of, 28
 Blenheim Palace and Marlborough, 169 *et seq.*, 210
 Blickling Hall, 109, 252
 Blore, Edward, 39
 Boleyn, Queen Anne, 72, 83, 95
 Bollingbroke, Viscount (Henry St. John), 177, 178, 181
 Bosworth Field, 104, 268
 Botha, General Louis, 223
 Bothmar, Count, 50, 51
 Brest, 177
 Brooke, Lord, 128
 Brooks's Club, 208
 Brown, Lancelot (Capability), 239, 240
 Buckingham, 233
 Buckingham and Chandos, The Dukedom of, 237
 Buckingham Palace, 30
 Buckinghamshire, The Earl of, 12, 119, 127
 Burke, Edmund, 44, 195, and Gregories, 199 *et seq.*; offered peerage, 203; death, 205
 Burke, Mrs. Edmund, 204-5
 Burke, Richard, 201, 202
 Burke, William, 206-7
 Burling, Lord, 108, 111, 112
 Burney, Fanny (Madame D'Arbley), 26, 27, 29
 Burns, Robert, 273-4
 Burton Pynson, 185

 Cabinet Room, Downing Street, 40
 Calais, 83

 Cam, The River, 89, 91, 98
 Cambridge, 112, 140
 Camelford, Lord, 193, 240
 Campbell, John, First Baron, 91
 Campbell-Bannerman, Sir Henry, 42
 Canning, George, 41
 Canterbury, The Archbishop of, 12
 Carleile, Third Earl of, 172
 Carlyle, Thomas, 52, 123, 138
 Castle Howard, 170
 Castle of Chillon, 60
 Cavendish, George, Wolsey's Secretary, 76-80
 Cavendish, Sir William, 76
 Cecil, Sir Robert, 81, 106-7, 109
 Cecil, William (Lord Burleigh), 107-8, 111-113
 Chalgrove Field, 129
 Charles I., King, 32, 84, and John Hampden, 118, 121, and the Banqueting House, 151 *et seq.*; his children, 157-8; execution, 161, 175
 Charles II., King, 22, 28, 48, and Audley End, 90
 Chiequers, 51, 120, 146, and the Cromwells, 249 *et seq.*
 Chesterfield, Fourth Earl of, 177, 193-4, 238
 Chichele, Bishop, 39
 Chilterns, The, 117, 128
 Chinnor, 128
 Churchill, Arabella, 176
 Churchill, Sir Winston, 175
 Clarendon, Edward, Earl of, 119, 123, 124
 Clarendon, The Present Earl of, 185
 Claypole, Lady Elizabeth, 144, 146
 Cobham, Viscount, 234, 235, 237, 239, 245
 Cockpit, The, 153
 Cocoa Tree Club, 208
 Colne, 94
 Congreve, William, 238
 Conn (Mason at Hatfield), 109
 Conyngham, Lady, 35
 Coombe Hill, 75
 Corbet, Miles, 49
 Cox, Richard, Bishop of Ely, 105
 Cox, Archdeacon, W., 177
 Cranmer, Archbishop, 64-66, 83
 Creoy, 23
 Crimean War, 99
 Croke, Sir Henry and Lady, 254
 Cromwell, Elizabeth, 221
 Cromwell, Elizabeth (Mother of Oliver Cromwell), 142, 145
 Cromwell, Sir Henry, 136
 Cromwell, Oliver, The Lord Protector, 48, 84, and Hampden, 122; contemplates emigration, 128; Life at Huntingdon, 137 *et seq.*, and Charles I., 152-153-156; Pitt on C., 210, and the Washingtons, 228, and Chequers, 254 *et seq.*
 Cromwell, Sir Oliver, 136-7

- Cromwell, Philip, 121
 Cromwell, Richard, 145, 146, 214
 Cromwell, Robert, 137, 142
 Cromwell, Thomas, 94, 95, 136
 Cromwells and Hinchbrook, 135 *et seq.*
 Cumnor Hills, 263
 Custis, Miss, 223
- Daily News*, The, 261
 Dante, 100
 Danube, The, 17
 Davidson, Dr. Randall (Archbishop of Canterbury), 62, 67
 De Vinet, Leonardo, 28
 De Chekers, Catherine, 253
 De Chekers, Elias, 250-1
 De Chekers, Sir Ralph, 253
 Dickens, Charles, 147
 Disraeli, Benjamin, Earl of Beaconsfield, 41, 199, 209
 Downing, Sir George, 40, 48, 50
 Drake, Sir Francis, 112
 Drake, Sir John, 175
 Drinkwater, Mr. John, 145
 Dublin, 209
 Dufferin and Ava, The Marquis of, 203
- Eastminster, The Old Church of, 78
 Edge Hill, 127
 Edward the Confessor, King, 17
 Edward III, King, 23, 23, 29
 Edward IV, King, 267
 Edward VI, King, 30, 65, 94, 105, 112
 Edward VII, King, 32, 33, 262
 Elkou Rasliké, The, 157
 Erasmus, 81
 Eschur, 74
 Essex, General The Earl of, 128
 Etton, 238
 Evans, Dr., 170
 Elizabeth, Princess, Daughter of Charles I, 157
 Elizabeth, Queen, 20, 21, 28, 81, 84, and Hatfield, 104-5, 107-8, 111-2, and Hampden House, 117, 120, and Hinchbrook, 136, 139, and Chequers, 253 *et seq.*
- Fairfax, The Sixth Baron, 218
 Farington, Joseph, 25, 171, 174-5, 201, 202, 204-5, 206
 Faneuilbridge, Lady, 145, 256
 Fisher, Bishop, 91-3
 Fitzwilliam, The Third Earl, 201
 Fleetwood, Mrs., 146, 256
 Fleming, Mrs. Valentine, 12
 Fox, Charles James, 44, 200, 207, 208
 Fox, George, 144
 Foxe, John, 61, 66
- Gage, Sir John, 80
 Ganges, The, 213
 Garter, The Order of the, 23
 George I, King, 47, and Marlborough, 173
 George II, King, 37, 50, 51, 90
 George III, King, 24-5, 26-7, and America, 190, and the Elder Pitt, 195
 George IV, King, 17, 21, 22, 25, 27-8
 George V, King, 30, 31
 Gibbon, Edward, 200
 Gibbons, Grinling, 22
 Gladstone, Right Hon., W. B., 41, 43, 44, 193
 Gloucester, Duke of, Son of Charles I, 157
 Godwin, Earl, 17
 Goldsmith, Oliver, 200, 221
 Grafton, Third Duke of, 189
- Gray, Thomas, 28
 Great Hampden, 127
 Great Missenden, 117
 Green, Matthew, 263
 Greenwich, 78
 "Gregories" and Edmund Burke, 199 *et seq.*
 Grenville, Captain, 234
 Grenville, George, 244, 245
 Grenville, Lady Heslor (Lady Chatham), 188-190, 242, 244
 Grenville, Wyndham, 245
 Grenville Papers, 235-6
 Grenvilles and Stowe House, 238 *et seq.*
 Gresham, Sir Richard, 74
 Groville the Diary, 33
 Grey, Second Earl, 41
 Grey, Lady Mary, 253
 Gwydyr House, 152
- Hacker, Colonel, 155, 159, 161
 Hampden, Griffith, 117
 Hampden House and John Hampden, 12, 117 *et seq.*
 Hampden, John, 117 *et seq.*; ship money, 119, and Cromwell, 122; death, 129
 Hampton Court, 71 *et seq.*
 Harworth, 76
 Harcourt, Archbishop, 264, 268
 Harcourt, Aubrey, 263, 270
 Harcourt, Lord Chancellor, 260, 266
 Harcourt, Earl, 260, 264, 268, 272
 Harcourt, Edward, 268, 270
 Harcourt Family, The, 259 *et seq.*
 Harcourt, Lady William, 271
 Harcourt, Robert, 271
 Harcourt, Viscount, 261
 Harcourt, Viscountess, 12
 Harcourt, Sir William, 260 *et seq.*; career, 268
 Harding, President Warren, 12
 Harley, Robert (First Earl of Oxford), 173, 177, 178, 281
 Harold, King, 17, 250
 Harrison, Frederic, 138
 Harvard College, 48
 Hastings, Warren, 201
 Hatfield House, 12, and the Cecils, 103 *et seq.*, 252
 Hawkins, John, 112
 Hawtrey Family, The, 253
 Hawtrey, William, 254
 Hayes, 185, 188-90, 244
 Headington, 266
 Henry I, King, 103
 Henry II, King, 17, 250-252
 Henry VI, King, 28
 Henry VII, King, 58, 268
 Henry VIII, King, 20, 64-5, and Wolsey, 72 *et seq.*, and Audley, 91 *et seq.*, and Hatfield, 106
 Heutznor, Paul, 21
 Herbert, Sir Thomas, 154-5, 159 *et seq.*
 Herkomer, Sir II., 67
 Harvey, Augustus, 234
 Hill, Lord Arthur, 19-20
 Hinchbrook, 12, and the Cromwells, 135 *et seq.*
 Hullein, Hans, 22, 32, 83, 94
 Holbein Gate, 152
 Hoppner, John, 44
 House of Commons, 55
 Howard, Queen Katherine, 82-3, 95
 Howley, Archbishop, 64
 Hughenden, 199
 Huntlydon, 135, 137, 140, 146
 Hussey, Dr., 201

- Inchiquin, Lady, 201-2, 204
 Iroton, Henry, 137
 Irving, Washington, 223, 224-7
- James I, King, 103, 106, 109, 111-12, and
 Hinchinbrooke, 136, and Whitehall, 151
 James II, King, 132, and Marlborough, 176
 Janivere, 109
 Jennings, Sarah, First Duchess of Marlborough,
 171, 173, 174, 178-9
 John, King, 120, 267
 Johnson, Dr. Samuel, 52, 200, 210
 Jones, Inigo, 151
 Jouganham, Petie, 61
 Juxon, Bishop, 58, 154, 159, and Charles I, 161
et seq.
- Kew, 24
 Keyes, Thomas, 253
 Kingston, Sir William, 81
 Kinloss, Lady, 245
 Knole, 232
- Labour Party, The, 19
 Lambeth Palace, 12, and the Archbishops, 53
et seq.
 Latimer, Bishop, 66
 Laud, Archbishop, 59, 62-3, 160
 Law, Right Hon. A. Bonar, 42, 250
 Lawrence, Dr., 205
 Lawrence, Sir Thomas, 21
 Lee of Fareham, Lord, 250
 Leetham, Colonel Sir Arthur, 12
 Leicester, 79
 Lenthall, Rector of Great Hampden, 124, 130
 Leopold, First King of the Belgians, 33
 Lewis, Lawrence, 219
 Lincoln, Abraham, 51
 Little Brinton, 227
 Lloyd George, Right Hon. David, 42, 44
 Lollard's Tower, 59-61
 London, 17
 London Museum, 255
 Louis XIV of France, King, 176, 177, 181
 Lydings, Robert, 109
- Macaulay, Lord, 107, 118, 124
 MacDonald, Right Hon. Ramsay, 42, 249
 Magna Charta, 120
 Malplaquet, 181, 254
 Malton, 201
 Malwood, 271
 Marlborough, The First Duke of, and Blenheim,
 169 *et seq.*; career of, 175 *et seq.*, 254
 Marlborough, The Present Duke of, 28
 Marlborough, 110, 191
 Marvell, Andrew, 153, 263
 Mary Stuart, Queen, 113, 253
 Mary Tudor, Queen, 65, 108, 112
 Mary, Princess, 32
 Masham, Mrs., 173
 Matilda, Queen, 251
 Mayflower Yacht, 217
 Maxso, Mr. Leo, 51
 Melba, Dame Nelly, 273
 Miles, Mr. G. B., 12
 Millais, Sir John, 43
 Monmouth, Duke of, 176
 Montauban, Mr. B., 233
 More, Sir Thomas, 91-2
 Morton, Cardinal, 58
 Mount Vernon, 12, 52, and George Washington,
 217 *et seq.*
 Mycenæ, 267
- Napoleon I, The Emperor, 47, 180
 National Portrait Gallery, 44
 Nelson, Lord, 44
 Neville Family, The, 90, 99
 New College, Oxford, 29
 Norfolk, The Third Duke of, 90
 Norris, Sir Henry, 80
 Northend, 191
 Nugent, George, Baron, 124, 125
 "Number Ten" and the Prime Ministers, 37
et seq.
 Nuneham, 12, and the Harcourts, 259 *et seq.*
- Okey, John, 49
 Oudenardo, 181
 Oxford, 17; St. Mary's Church, 66, 128, 169,
 270
 Oxford, The Bishop of, 59
- Page, Mr. Walter, 138
 Paul III, Pope, 93
 Peel, Sir Robert, 41
 Pepys, 49, 50, 140
 Peterborough, Third Earl of, 242
 Pitt House, 12, and the Elder Pitt, 185 *et seq.*
 Pitt, The Elder, Earl of Chatham, 12, 110, 178,
 185 *et seq.*, 193, 207, and Burke, 209, and
 Cromwell, 210, 234, 242, and Stowe, 243
 Pitt The Younger, William, 39, 44-46
 Politars, 23
 Pope, Alexander, 258-9, 266-7
 Postcombe, 128
 Potomac, 213, 217
 Pride, Colonel, 163
 Primate of All England, 56 *et seq.*
 Prince Consort, The, 32
 Princes Risborough, 130
 Prior, Matthew, 263
 Putney, 45
 Pym, John, 255
 Fynton House, 129
- Queen's Lodge, 25
- Raleigh, Sir Walter, 112
 Ramillies, 191
 Reading, 17
 Revett, Colonel, 254
 Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 21, 44, 170, 175, 200-2;
 Rookingham, Marquis of, 206, 209, 211-2
 Royal Lodge, 25
 Rhine, The, 17
 Rich, Sir Richard, 92-3
 Richard I, King, 232
 Richard of London, Bishop, 250
 Richelieu, Cardinal, 81
 Ridley, Bishop, 66
 Rubens, Paul, 21, 151
 Rupert, Prince, 128, 129
 Russell, Lady, 146, 254-5
 Russell, Sir John, 254-5
- Saffron Walden, 89
 St. Ives, 146
 St. James's Palace, 154, 161
 St. James's Park, 161, 180
 St. John, Henry, Viscount Bolingbroke, 181
 St. John's Church, Huntingdon, 142-3
 St. Just, Armand, 274
 St. Paul's Cathedral, 50
 Salisbury, The Present Marquis of, 12, 104
 Sandwich, The First Earl of, 139
 Sandwich, The Present Earl of, 12, 137
 Sargent, John Singer, 67
 Saybrook, 128

- Sayo, Lord, 128
 Scotland Yard, 31
 Scott, Sir Walker, 208
 Seigemoor, 176
 Seymour, Mr., 155
 Shakespeare, 27, 125, 147, 274-5
 Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, 200, 208
 Ship Money, 119
 Sidney Sussex College, 255
 Singer, Samuel Weller, 76
 "Singlespeech" Hamilton, 211-2
 Skelton, Thomas, 75
 Soane, Sir John, 43
 Southampton, Fourth Earl of, 165-6
 Spencer, Lord Charles, 46
 Springfield, 31
 Stamfordham, Lord, 12, 30
 Stanhope, Lady Leicester, 45, 242
 Stanton Harcourt, 12, 265, 266, 272
 Stephen, King, 232-2
 Stowe House, 170, 210, and the Grenvilles, 233
et seq.
 Stowe School, 240
 Stuart, Gilbert, 220
 Suffolk, First Earl of, 90
 Sulgrave Institute, 225
 Sulgrave Manor, 224 *et seq.*
 Swift, Dean, 58, 178, 181
 Symeon, Elizabeth, 126
- Talleyrand, 67
 Temple, Dr. Archbishop of Canterbury, 67
 Temple, Earl, 185, 195, 234-5, 243-4; death, 245
 Tennis Court, Whitehall, 153
 Tennyson, Alfred, Lord, 73, 100, 203, 264
 Thane, 129, 130
 Thames, The, 56, 213, 259
 Theobalds, 106
 Thomlinson, Colonel, 156, 162
 Thomlinson, John, 143
 Thurbone, John, 254
 Tilting Ground, 162
Times, The, 261
 "Thron of Athens," 274-5
 Torbay, 176
 Tostig, Earl, 17
 Townshend, Charles, 189
 Trevor Family, The, 127
 Trinity College, Cambridge, 269
 Turenne, Marshal, 176
- Utrecht, Peace of, 181
- Valdré, 241
 Valley Forge, 221
- Vanbrugh, Sir John, 170-174, and Stowe, 235
 Van Dyck, Sir Anthony, 21, 64, 159
 Venice, 74
 Versailles, 176, 233
 Victoria, Queen, 18-20, 30, 32, 64
 Virgilia, 228
- Waco, Dean, 63
 Wakefield, Sir Charles C., 223
 Walden, 94-5
 Walpole, Horace, 138, 173, 238, 271
 Walpole, Sir Robert, 37, 42-3, 213
 Walpole, Thomas, 189
 Waltham Cross, 64-5
 Warham, Archbishop, 65
 Warwick, Sir Philip, 130
 Washington City, 217-8
 Washington Family, The, 226 *et seq.*
 Washington, George, and Mount Vernon, 217
et seq., and slavery, 219, 229
 Washington, The First Lawrence, 226-7
 Washington, Lawrence, Rector of Purleigh, 228
 Washington, Robert, 227
 Waterloo, 28
 Watlington, 129
 Wellington, The Present Duke of, 28
 Wellington, First Duke of, 39
 Wendover, 117
 West, Bishop, 104
 Westminster Abbey, 60
 Westminster Hall, 56, 151-2, 154, 156
 Weymouth, 26
 Wheeler, Lady, 156
 Whitehead, William, 263
 Wilhelm, Ex-Kaiser, 31
 Wilkes, John, 244
 William I, King, 16-17-251, 259
 William III, King, 152, 176, 177
 William IV, King, 26, 27, 33
 Wilson, Thomas, 109
 Winchester, Bishop of, 59
 Winchester, 29
 Windsor Castle, 12, and the Sovereigns, 15 *et seq.*, 227
 Wolsey, Cardinal, 71 *et seq.*
 Woodstock, 169, 172
 Woolley, Lady, 254
 Wootton Hall, 237
 Wron, Sir Christopher, 43, 58
 Wyatt, afterwards Sir Juftry Wyatville, 22
 Wykeham, Bishop William of, 28-9
 Wyndham William, 204
- Young Pretender, The, 32
 York, The Duke of (son of Charles I), 176

